

Ark Volume 24

Act 1: Invade Rwigenberg

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

1,200 W speakers let out a burst of violent sound in Global Exos Planning Department. The bass made it feel like the air was vibrating. It was a storm of sound! However, the staff of the Planning Department didn't care about that sound anymore. Rather than listening to the sound, they were watching the overwhelming images on the 120 inch LED TV. The staff of the Planning Department such as Ha Myung-woo, Kim Gwon-tae and Ho Myung-hwan had been staring blankly at the large TV screen for a few hours. They weren't the only ones staring at the TV. Korea.....No, perhaps millions of people were in the same situation all over the world. The TV was showing the real time battle of the Demonic War at Kwarian Island. Currently, similar images were being broadcasted from 5~6 different channels. Shortly after the Legend Quest was triggered in New World, each broadcaster mobilized to broadcast the combat situation in Kwarian in real time. And a large number of personnel from Global Exos were also monitoring the situation. They were watching the TV broadcast in the Planning Department. However, the Global Exos' Planning Department staff wasn't watching the broadcast comfortably.

"T-this!"

"Damn those demons!"

"The expedition army is being pushed back!"

"Aw, the lead fleet has been wiped out by the demons' counterattack!"

The staffs' faces changed every moment because of the military situation. The outcome of this battle affected a lot of people. If the expedition army failed to stop the Dark Lord from resurrecting then there was no guarantee what would happen to New World. Global Exos

would completely lose control of New World. Then they wouldn't be able to give the normal game service anymore. It was truly a crisis for Global Exos. And the crisis in the workplace was also a crisis for the staff. If Global Exos had a financial problem then they would be transmitted down to the employees. That's right. The outcome of the Demonic War didn't just affect the contents of the game. Their livelihood also depended on it. If New World was occupied by the Dark Lord then the users might not be able to play the game anymore. They might lose their jobs altogether. The Demonic War felt even more urgent to the staff of Global Exos than the players.

"Ugh, three combat ships have sunk!"

"Dammit, we can only look at his situation....."

Despairing voices emerged as they watch the expedition's battleship being destroyed. In fact, Global Exos gave a special holiday for the staff playing New World so that they would join the expedition army. Most of the staff was monitoring them. However, that was only possible if the staff had reached a certain level. The low levelled staff had no choice but to watch the screen blankly. But the military situation was different from their expectations and they became gloomier by the minute. The combined expedition from the Bristania and Schudenberg kingdoms had approximately 100,000 people! They rode the ships and arrived at Kwarian Island. However, the power of the demons present at Kwarian was beyond imagination. There were hundreds of thousands of demons prepared to stop the expedition army! And there was also a huge amount of magic concentrated on Kwarian so their revival speed also quickened. Therefore the expedition was in danger of being destroyed within a few hours.

"Is there really no way?"

"Do we just have to watch the destruction of New World?"

Everyone moaned desperately.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Then there was a flash of light and an abrupt roar from the TV. The spacious office was filled with a lot of light. The staff flinched and lifted their heads.

“Is that.....?”

“There’s no doubt, it is the airships of the Magic Institute!”

That’s right. The airships had appeared in the dark sky! The airships used the Spear of Thor to melt thousands of demons. They immediately began to support the expedition army by air.

“Ohhhhhh!”

The light coming from the Spear of Thor was like a light of salvation to the staff of the Planning Division.

“They’re just in time!”

Ha Myung-woo clutched his fist tightly and shouted. It was the presence of the 2nd expedition force. But after the 2nd expedition force joined, it couldn’t afford to support the naval battle anymore. When the airships appeared, the gargoyles and Drakens instantly appeared from the Rwigenberg. The flying monsters gathered like vultures and the air battle started.

“Damn, the airships have low manoeuvrability so it will be difficult to deal with them!”

“Is it possible?”

The staff once again watched anxiously as several hot air balloons crashed.

Buaaaaa! Buaaaaa!

Then there was the sound of engines and thousands of flying boats emerged from the 30 airships. They began attacking the gargoyles and Drakens in an orderly fashion.

“A-amazing!”

“I didn’t know that the Magic Institute possessed flying boats!”

“The users controlling the flying boats don’t seem to be ordinary either.....”

“.....What on earth? The person commanding the flying boat in the lead?”

All the employees’ eyes were focused on the user who took control of the aerial combat. The user was commanding the flying boat formation and killing demons with amazing skill! Then Ho Myung-hwan in the back jumped up and yelled.

“Ark, that user is Ark-nim!”

That’s right. The user that the camera and the Global Exos staff were focused on in the battlefield was Ark. Ha Myung-woo looked at Ark on the screen after hearing Ho Myung-hwan’s words.

“Ark?”

Of course, Ha Myung-woo had heard the name Ark a few times. But he had always appeared as Dark Wolf in the videos so this was the first time he saw Ark’s actual appearance.

“That’s right, that user.....”

Ha Myung-woo hadn’t become the chief of the Planning Department of a big company at a young age because of luck. He got this position because of his ability to judge the situation and respond faster than other people. Ha Myung-woo instinctively sensed that the core of this battle was Ark.

“Okay, tell all the candidates participating in the Kwarian battle to support Ark as much as possible!”

Ha Myung-woo judged the situation and directed. Well, he couldn’t know how useful the instruction was just by watching on TV. But that

was all he could do now. Thanks to Ark, the battle tilted towards the side of the expedition army. The cheat like scorch cannons installed on Kwarian were expected by Ha Myung-woo after hearing about it from several staff members and he watched as Ark annihilated them after much struggles.

“Did you see? Did you see? That is Ark-nim!”

Ho Myung-hwan shouted excitedly as Ark soared up from the lava like a phoenix and destroyed the scorch cannons. Ho Myung-hwan felt a deep emotion for Ark so he had been watching him since Ark was level 150.

“Ohhh, as expected of Ark!”

“As expected, Ark is immortal!”

The Planning Department instantly became excited after seeing Ark’s moves.

“Now, let’s go. Ark!”

“Take out that stingray quickly!”

“If the Rwigenberg is destroyed then it will be the expedition’s victory!”

The staff shouted as Ark finished destroying the cannons and approached Rwigenberg with the airships. But the next moment, their faces stiffened.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The attack launched by the airships hit the Rwigenberg. The Planning Department staff and the millions of viewers thought it was all over. However, the scene revealed was different from their expectations. The Rwigenberg didn’t even have one scratch. Only the transparent shield surrounding the Rwigenberg was scratched.

“S-shield?”

The staffs' faces became puzzled just like Ark's. A huge number of demons once again appeared from the Rwigenberg. And that was just the beginning. The scorch cannons that Ark had barely managed to destroy once again reformed on top of the castle walls on Rwigenberg's back.

"That is ridiculous!"

The staff stared at the scene with shock and despair. Ha Myung-woo hurriedly shouted.

"Kim Gwon-tae, something.....isn't there another way?"

"If there was another way then would we just be watching this?"

Kim Gwon-tae sighed and shook his head. Ha Myung-woo slammed his fist against a desk.

"Damn, we are the game publisher! Does it make sense that we can only watch New World be smashed? Isn't there something we can do? If only we could stop the Dark Lord's resurrection by hacking the main server!"

"But....."

The Planning Department staff trailed off. Then Ho Myung-hwan's eyes widened as he watched the TV.

"Team Chief-nim!"

"What?"

Ha Myung-woo was about to shout angrily when he suddenly shut his mouth. A giant object had appeared on the 120 inch screen. A white tower in the centre of a huge land mass was crossing the sky. The giant land mass had dozens of gun turrets installed that fired towards the flash bombs heading towards the airships. That wasn't all. Then thousands of people riding on the back of skyrays shot arrows and 100 armoured battleships attacked the sea demons.

"Shangri-La and the Eastern Nation, the merchant's guild..... They are Wormer, Shambala.....Ark's clan!"

Ho Myung-hwan shouted at the sight.

"Ark's clan?"

"Ark-nim is the centre of his group. But Wormer is the inventor who helped Ark-nim in the Demonic War and he had fought in life and death situations with Shambala. The relationship between them is a little strange but Sid is the one who helps Ark-nim financially and he has a vast amount of influence in the merchant's guild.

"They entered the war to help Ark?"

"That's right!"

Ho Myung-hwan replied in an excited voice. Ha Myung-woo nodded after hearing those words.

"As my intuition said, the core of this battle is Ark. Wouldn't we understand the situation more if we closely watch Ark?"

"Ark-nim has a deal with the game exclusive news. While the other stations are also broadcasting this in real time, the game exclusive news will be showing the video taken by Ark."

"Okay, change to the game exclusive news channel."

The staff switched channels on the TV at Ha Myung-woo's command. The game exclusive news was also broadcasting the Kwarian battle as a special story. As expected, they were broadcasting the video Ark took using the eyeball.

"Ho Myung-hwan, watch carefully since you know Ark the best."

"I understand."

Ho Myung-hwan answered with an excited expression.

“We.....”

The other staff stuttered as they looked at Ha Myung-woo. He had just been yelling about finding another method while watching the battle and now Ha Myung-woo’s attitude had completely changed. They looked at Ha Myung-woo before turning back to the screen as he exclaimed.

“If you have nothing to do then cheer!”

“I understand.”

“Play, play, Ark!”

The Planning Department staff entered cheering mode.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The roaring sound resounded through the dark space again and again. It was a sound that shook the brain through their eardrums. However, that deafening sound through the video was nothing to experiencing it in real life. The battlefield considered of several kilometres with Kwarian Island in the centre and thousands of flashes covered this space. 1,000 armoured battleships were fighting against the sea demons while the airships were engaged with thousands of demons in the sky. However, the most intense battles were coming from the flying boats that Ark commanded. Ark fought fiercely in the forefront while riding Burning Soul.

“Hmmm Burning Soul, let’s rearrange the formation!”

Kurarara, kurarara!

Then Burning Soul who was transformed in Pendragon spewed out flames and retreated. There was no time to rest once stepping foot on a battlefield. As soon as he left, a flying boat approached him and shouted.

“Ark-nim, the 21st squadron has been encircled by the demons!”

Ark couldn't take a break as he gave out new orders.

“Tell the 13th and 14th squadron to support them!”

“If the 13th and 14th squadron leaves then there will be no one to protect the hot air balloons on the right side.”

“I know that. But if the 21st squadron doesn't survive then the demons will penetrate the right defense line. The whole defense line will be at risk. How the hot air balloons retreat and concentrate on rescuing the 21st squadron!”

“I understand.”

The messenger who received Ark's order turned the flying boat around and flew back into battle. However, other messengers arrived and shouted before the other one had even disappeared.

“Ark-nim, the 8th squadron is requesting support!”

“There is no room to support them at the moment. Tell them to retreat from the front lines and recover!”

“Yes, I'll communicate the orders!”

The messenger replied before flying back.

“Damn, it feels like my head is about to burst.....”

Ark sighed after looking at the complicated tangle of flying boat squadrons and demons. When looking at the military situation, there were several painful scenes. If he focused the troops here then it would be possible to somewhat improve the military situation. Why couldn't the Commander see it?

.....That was what he had thought once or twice. In fact, that was the reason why Ark accepted the position of the 2nd expedition's commander. But he realized it was different once he actually became the

commander and looked at the military situation. Of course, this wasn't the first time Ark was a commander. He had experience in conducting the raccoons in the Underground World and the Baran clan in Seutandal. He also had experience in the siege to recapture Silvana. However, that was in a limited area with thousands of people. This time the size of the troops and battlefield was different. The battlefield was several kilometres of sea and sky and there were hundreds of thousands of people fighting. With an enormous battlefield like this, it wasn't so simple to give out instructions. He couldn't afford to worry about one individual or squadron. He had to grasp the overall military situation and make moves according to that.

"A best choice in a large scale battlefield that changes every moment doesn't exist!"

Ark realized this after commanding the military expedition. In order to minimize serious damage, Ark had to determine when to send reinforcements or when to leave the squad alone. Of course, if he worried over it then there might be another way. However, there was no time to think on a battlefield that was always changing. But there were other reasons why Ark was experiencing difficulties.

'The important thing in a commander is to quickly confirm the entire military situation.'

However, it wasn't that easy to move the troops. In fact, previously Ark had used a Feather of Whispering to convey the communication to the troops after grasping the situation. But if there were a lot of troops then that was impossible. The reason was because the Feather of Whispering didn't overlap. In other words, it was impossible to communicate with other leaders when he was already talking to someone. If they weren't many troops then that wasn't a problem. But it was different when commanding tens of thousands of people. Moreover, the Feather of Whispering could only be used between users so he couldn't communicate with the NPC captains of the airships. In order to avoid confusion, Ark only used the Feather of Whispering with the major leaders like JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members and used

messengers for everybody else. Therefore Ark had to make commands within a few seconds so there was a considerable burden on him.

‘This can’t continue. Sometimes he was already too late when he gave the order. If I visualize the military situation in my mind then I can estimate the moves of the demons beforehand. But it a large battlefield like this, the slightest error will cause more damage to the troops! In order to avoid the large damage, I have to willingly submit to the small damage.’

Ark came to that conclusion. For example, if unit A advanced then there was a high probability that unit A would be attacked by the demons. Before making unit A advance, he had to command the troops on the left and right side beforehand. If the demons attacked unit A then the flying boats on the left side would attack and wipe the demons out. He lured the enemy within a certain area and attacked! Those sorts of tactics were effective. If they responded flexibly to the situation then it would be possible to minimize the damage while dealing huge damage to the enemy. Since Ark used these strategies, the 2nd expedition received less damage than the 1st. But in some cases, the demons didn’t move as expected and the unit was isolated before being wiped out. He had expected that when thinking of ways to minimize the damage. While Ark was surveying the battlefield, he had to look at a 3D field consisting of land and air that was several kilometres wide. Therefore Ark felt like his head was breaking.

“Nevertheless.....”

Ark sighed as he observed the battlefield.

“..... The situation isn’t good.”

Ark had used a large number of strategies while enduring the headaches but the military situation was still dark. In fact, the situation had improved with the appearance of Shangri-La, the Eastern Nation and the merchant’s guild. However, the battle didn’t move as expected. The timing was also bad. By the time the merchant ships joined, almost half of the 1st expedition fleet had already sunk. The power was reduced by

half. Of course, the sea monsters also suffered a lot of damage but their strength was restored thanks to the black obelisks. If the merchant ships had arrived earlier then it would be different but the 1st expedition had received a lot of damage. It was the same for Shangri-La and the Eastern Nation who were helping with the aerial combat. Shangri-La had interrupted the flash bombs that were heading towards the airships. In the end, the flying boats and the skyrays were the ones taking care of the thousands of enemies. Unlike the expedition, the demons would resurrect once a certain amount of time passed.

“If I don’t find a way to change the current military situation then it will be hopeless.”

Ark made a pained face and bit his lip. The best way to move away from this status quo was for the expedition to retreat and attack again once they were in their best condition. If the dead users revived then they could concentrate everything on killing the demons faster than they could revive. Unfortunately, there was a time limit on this battle.

-Somewhere in the darkness of the world, the Dark Lord’s resurrection ceremony has begun!

<Time remaining until the Dark Lord’s resurrection: 17 hours>

That’s right. The Dark Lord’s resurrection ceremony! He had gained some time by destroying the scorch cannons on Kwarian but now there were only 17 hours left. Even if the warriors had revived and were waiting on the continent’s coast, there was no time for them to reach Kwarian.

“In the end, I have to somehow stop the resurrection with these troops.”

But they were barely able to maintain the present position with these troops. They had to be able to penetrate Rwigenberg’s shields in order to stop the resurrection ceremony.....

-Kurwarwarwarwa!

At that time, there was a loud cry and a surge of monsters. He turned his head and saw some Drakens rushing towards him. The 8th squadron had retreated like Ark commanded so the demons had reached the rear.

‘Che, these jerks. They don’t even give me a gap to think. Burning Soul!’

Ark bit his lip and grabbed Burning Soul tightly. Then Burning Soul rotated his body and fired some skills.

“Dark strike! Dark strike! Dark strike!”

The dark blade penetrated their necks. Pendragon had the special effect of increase his defense and attack by 20%! When he hit the Drakens’ vital spot, they lost 20% health and stumbled.

“Burning Soul, this time attack the right Draken!”

Kurarara, kurarara!

Burning Soul turned and grabbed the Draken. The Draken struggled but its smaller body was no match for Burning Soul. The Tallon riding on the Draken lost its balance and fell. But Burning Soul continued embracing the Draken and stuck his claws in its chest. Meanwhile, Ark had stayed firmly on Burning Soul and continuously struck the other Draken with Dark Strike. After a while, the Draken’s health was reduced to 3%.

“Bah, now it is ready to eat. Demonic Seal!”

Ark shouted as he shoved his sword into the Draken’s chest. At the same time, the Draken’s body was sucked into the blade. The black aura strengthened and a message window appeared.

-Shining Darkness has been charged with demonic energy.

<Charged demons: 46>

* Shining Darkness can be used.

“.....That’s it.”

There was a satisfied smile on Ark’s face. Ark had sealed as much demons as possible using Demonic Seal. Of course it wasn’t that easy. Shining Darkness had to be plunged directly into the demon before it could be sealed up. However, that was difficult while fighting in the air. Even so, Ark had several reasons for using Demonic Seal. He could use Demonic Soul when the demon’s health fell to 3%. It was possible to take care of the demons and secure the energy in order to use the skill Shining Darkness.

‘I can’t guarantee what will happen in the future. So I should have a strong special move available. Shining Darkness becomes stronger as more energy is charged so I should gather the energy when there is a chance.’

And there was another advantage to using Demonic Seal. There were a large number of black obelisks around Kwarian. And a huge amount of magic was concentrated thanks to the resurrection ceremony. No matter how many demons they handled, they would just resurrect after a certain amount of time. The black obelisks were on the Rwigenberg so it wasn’t possible to destroy them. However, there were other ways to prevent the resurrection of the demons. That was sealing them into the sword using Demonic Seal! That’s right. Demonic Seal didn’t just kill the demons. It was used to seal the demons within equipment. Therefore the demons affected by Demonic Seal couldn’t be resurrected. Of course, the amount of demons that Ark could seal was limited. There were hundreds of thousands of demons on the battlefield so Demonic Seal might be insignificant. But if he sealed dozens of them then wasn’t that better than killing them?

‘If the demons decrease by even one then that will decrease the damage to my allies!’

-Kurwarwarwarwa!

Meanwhile, another two Drakens rushed towards him on both sides.

“Burning Soul, take the left Draken!”

Burning Soul quickly turned and grabbed the wings of the left Draken. Then Ark threw his body off Burning Soul and shouted.

“Summon Demon, Purital. Clad Armour! Hook Explosion!”

At the same time, bones reformed around Ark. And the hooks grabbed the neck of a Draken. Ark was pulled 10 metres towards the Draken. The Tallon riding the Draken flinched and lifted its spear.

-Bakum, bakum, boramarad!

“Shut up! Riposte!”

-Kurama, nohumnira..... Karak..... Kuaaaa....

Riposte pushed the enemy back 10 metres! When Ark perfectly connected Parry with Counterattack, Riposte was used and the Tallon was thrown off. It fell into the sea with a scream.

“Now, shall I check how hard the back of your head is?”

Ark smiled and muttered while on top of the Draken. The Draken started sweating and tried to throw Ark off its back. However, Purital’s hooks were solidly fixed on its body and Ark kept on attacking its head.

“Dark strike! Dark strike! Dark strike!”

Pepepepeng, pepepepeng, pepepeng!

The Draken soon had huge lumps on the back of its head. He turned the Draken towards Burning Soul. He used the Draken to approach Burning Soul.

“Hook Explosion!”

Ark used the hooks to transfer his body. Then something shrieked and a Draken fell down like a lightning bolt above him.

"Ack, what the? Damn, Riposte!"

Ark rotated while flying through the air and used Riposte like mad. The falling Draken was hit by Riposte and wobbled.

-Makum, baramada!

Ark conquered the crisis and barely managed to reach the Draken. The Tallon that was riding the falling Draken shrieked and grabbed Ark's waist. Thanks to the sudden weight of two bodies, one of the hooks fell.

"T-this bastard! Dark Stri.....damn!"

-Baram, kuradara, kuram!"

Ark tried to wield his sword but the Tallon kept on shaking his body. The demon wasn't smart but it was determined what to do in this situation.

.....It intended for both of them to die together.

"Who would want to die with a demon like you? Dammit, go away! Away!"

Ark stepped on the Tallon with his foot but it wouldn't budge. Meanwhile Burning Soul was struggling with the Draken so the remaining hook was also coming loose.

"Matanyi Shooter no. 1, Devil Penetrating Arrow!"

There was a sharp voice and a bolt crossed the space. It hit the wrist of the Tallon holding onto Ark. With its wrist cut in half, the Tallon instantly fell.

"Phew..... I-I lived!"

Ark sighed with relief after the Tallon fell and turned his gaze. The person who shot the arrow was Timosi. She was a solid ally when they were on the same side. When it was an aerial battle, the magicians and archers could exert a more powerful effect than the warriors. And she

had superior firepower among the archers! While she was equal to Shambala when fighting on the ground, Timosi was like a fish who met water in the air. While Ark had a hard time taking care of three or four Drakens, Timosi was easily dealt with four or five while also helping Ark. Of course, Timosi wasn't fighting in order to help Ark. She stayed close to Ark because she thought it would be a chance to get revenge on Maseutyu and the Red Man. However, helping him was a separate problem.

"Bah, don't misunderstand. I didn't help you because I'm interested in you!"

Timosi snorted and turned her head when Ark smiled to thank her. What on earth? They were on the same side but she really was a strange woman.

'Well, if she's useful then her personality isn't a problem. Now.....'

"Dark strike! Dark strike!"

Ark safely got on the Draken and got rid of the Tallon. The combination of Burning Soul and Ark's attacks made the Draken quickly lose health and it was sealed inside his sword. And he moved back to Burning Soul before whispering to JusticeMan.

-JusticeMan ajusshi, what is the situation?

-We've lured the demons as planned.

He then heard the voices of JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members who were leading the 11th squadron. Ark mainly used JusticeMan's squadron to lure the demons for his prediction tactics. Ark's actual combat ability couldn't keep up with JusticeMan's experience. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members showed their skills but continuously luring the demons and surviving.

"Admiral Jabel, turn the airships in the 4 o'clock direction and launch the Spear of Thor!"

Ark shouted into Curio's ear. He couldn't use the Feather of Whispering to talk to NPCs. Therefore Ark used Curio's Summon Stud and placed the subordinates with the captains of the airships. This was in order to give quick commands during the battle. Therefore the airships turned right away after receiving Ark's order.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

This was the reason for luring the demons to one place. In fact, the flying boat squadrons alone weren't enough to reduce the number of demons. The only way to quickly reduce the number of demons before they could revive was to use tremendous firepower. And the power of the Spear of Thor was enough to melt hundreds of demons.

"That's it, now I have some leeway again."

Ark looked around and muttered. However, it was just a temporary break. With the black obelisks, the demons could revive infinitely. And every time the expedition would suffer more damage. The Eastern Nation members that Shambala led wouldn't be able to last forever if the demons kept on reviving. No, already 1,000 warriors on the flying boats and the Eastern Nation members have already been killed. Therefore it became more difficult to face the demons that kept on proliferating.

"And even if I destroy all the black obelisks....."

Ark sighed and gazed around. The armoured ships in the sea and the airships were dealing with tens of thousands of demons. However, a powerful battle was still continuing that made the ones on the sea and sky feel boring.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Dozens of shells were fired from a large land mass! And the giant stingray fired the scorch cannons in retaliation! That's right. The aerial combat between Shangri-La and Rwigenberg! The battle on Kwarian wasn't just to drive the demons back. The purpose of the expedition armies was to stop the Dark Lord's resurrection. And the resurrection ceremony was currently taking place on Rwigenberg. In other words,

the number of demons they killed didn't matter if they couldn't penetrate Rwigenberg's shield. Currently the expedition could compete equally with Rwigenberg thanks to Shangri-La. Despite them being 1 kilometre apart, an intense bombardment was continuing.

'The offensive power is 6:4, with Rwigenberg being slightly stronger.'

This was what Ark concluded from seeing the engagement. Therefore Shangri-La was using all its firepower to stop the attacks from the scorch cannons.

'But the biggest problem is its defense.'

That's right. That was the problem. The cheat like shield surrounding Rwigenberg! Despite the close battle between Shangri-La and Rwigenberg going on for a few hours, the shield was still holding strong. Of course, most of the firepower was used to intercept the flash bombs but quite a few attacks still hit. Therefore Shangri-La was receiving more damage as the battle became longer. If this continued then Shangri-La would eventually become battered and destroyed.

".....There is only one way left.

Ark muttered and bit his lip. In fact, he knew this from the beginning. Despite that, Ark had focused his strategies on reducing the number of demons. But now he had no choice. Ark looked at the flashing message window on the right corner again.

-Somewhere in the darkness of the world, the Dark Lord's resurrection ceremony has begun!

<Time remaining until the Dark Lord's resurrection: 16 hours>

There was no time left.

'If I miss this opportunity then I don't know when there will be a chance to try again.'

Ark worried for a while before finally making his decision.

“Admiral Jabel, the airships and flying boat squadrons will use the last strategy!”

“I understand. The entire fleet!”

Curio conveyed Jabel’s voice. At the same time, dozens of signals shot from the deck of the Silver Arrow. Then hundreds of hot air balloons, 20 airships and thousands of flying boats rose and formed a line between Rwigenberg and Shangri-La.

“Shangri-La and the airships will concentrate on charging their weapons! Meanwhile the flying boat squadrons will defense against the demon attacks!”

The flying boats used their engines and scattered. Their strategy to exterminate the number of demons had succeeded so the flying boats could easily defend against the attacks. Of course, those demons would obviously be revived.

‘It will be 10~20 minutes before the demons revive. We have to defend and make sure that Shangri-La and the airships don’t receive any attacks. The problem is the flash bomb from the Rwigenberg. But the scorch cannons just unleashed a barrage so it will take some time to recharge.’

This was why Ark had reduced the number of demons. It was the blank period where the thousands of dead demons hadn’t revived yet! While the flying boats interrupted the attacks from the demons.....

“Ark, all the gun turrets on Shangri-La have finished charging!”

“Ark-nim, the magic guns and the Spear of Thor has finished recharging!”

He heard Wormer’s words and then Jabel’s. All of the weapons aimed towards the Rwigenberg.

Ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku!

Meanwhile, the scorch cannons had finished recharging and were ready to resume the bombardment. Then hundreds of flying boats headed towards Ark. The leaders of the squadrons saluted.

“Ark-nim!”

“Hum.....then please.”

Ark nodded with a resolute face.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The scorch cannons exploded from the Rwigenberg at the same time. Dozens of black masses were fired. If they hit the airships then enormous damage would be suffered! Then Ark’s eyes flashed and he shouted.

“Suicide corps.....!”

“Waaaaahhhhh!”

“Ohh, my will is a powerful shield!”

At that moment, 30 flying boats flew towards the front and scattered. The magicians in them faced the approaching flash bombs. The 30 of them used Willpower Exchange to share magic and used the shield spell. When the magicians used their shield magic, dozens of shields appeared in front of the airships and Shangri-La. The flash bombs collided with the defense shields.

“It has collided. Everybody focus!”

Ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The dozens of flash bombs stopped moving. However, that was just a temporary phenomenon. The magicians’ magic wasn’t enough to stop the attack. It wouldn’t even be able to stop the guns from Shangri-La or the Spear of Thor from the airships. Cracks started to spread on the shield until it broke. In fact, Ark hadn’t expected the shields to stop the flash bombs.

‘.....But now’s the chance!’

The magicians pulled something small from their bags.

-Magic Bomb

Type: 1st grade invention Designer and Producer: Wormer, Magic Institute

In the past, the Magic Institute created a power Magic Bomb that was unstable. But thanks to Magaro’s research notes, that problem has been fixed. Wormer has also improved the bomb using high level techniques. But since the magic is now stable, the explosive power is slightly reduced.

<When the timer is operated, it will explode after 5 seconds>

-The timer of the Magic Bomb has been started.

<Time remaining until the explosion: 3 seconds, 2 seconds, 1 second.....>

It was the Magic Bomb that the Magic Institute designer and Wormer improved. In fact, Shangri-La’s gun turrets were actually made using technology that Wormer had adapted from this bomb. It was also because of these bombs that Ark thought of involving Shangri-La. When the magicians operated the bombs, numbers quickly appeared on the surface. And the time remaining was 0 seconds!

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Hundreds of flying boats shook from the shock. 30 Magic Bombs had exploded at once. The explosive power far exceeded the gun turrets. The flash bombs that had been delayed by the shield magic exploded in the air. This was the main reason why the magicians acted to delay the flash bombs. They sacrificed their lives to interrupt it! And immediately after their sacrifice.....

“Now. Focus all the firepower on one spot!”

The Spear of Thor and gun turrets fired at once. There was an intense roaring sound and flash of light that blinded their eyes and deafened them. All of these attacks were heading towards Rwigenberg!

‘This powerful attack should be enough to penetrate Rwigenberg’s shields!’

That’s right. Ark had reduced the number of demons and sacrificed the magicians in order to stop the flash bombs! It was in order to save Shangri-La and the airships’ firepower so they could concentrate 100% of their attacks on one point of Rwigenberg’s shield.

“Take this! This is the maximum firepower of the military expedition. Try and stop it!”

The dozens of shots fired from Shangri-La and the airships struck Rwigenberg’s shield. Rwigenberg shook as it was struck and there wrapped in a wave of heat.

After a while.....

Act 2: Heroes’ Descendants

“Oh my god!”

“T-that is ridiculous!”

“Who on earth made such a ridiculous thing?”

The staff of the Planning Department watched the 120 inch screen with baffled faces. The same cry came from the screen showing Ark and the expedition members.

Kaaaaaaah!

The Rwigenberg flapped its huge wings as it was hit by the heat wave. And the shield wrapped around the Rwigenberg flickered. That’s

right! Despite concentrating the firepower of the military expedition, the shield was still there. A groan emerged from Ark's mouth as he stared at the protective film.

"The shield didn't break despite all the firepower being concentrated on one point....."

Was it saying there was no way to break the shield? This meant they couldn't prevent the resurrection ceremony even if they destroyed all the demons.

....Despair!

That's right. It meant despair. Despair was the conclusion he came to despite sacrificing all those soldiers.

"Ark-nim, the demons are attacking by using the gap left by the destroyed shields!"

"The members have fallen into disorder. Please give a command!"

Messengers shouted from every direction.

"The soldiers....."

Ark said in a hoarse voice and shut his mouth. Many soldiers had died in order to penetrate the Rwigenberg's shield. They were also attacked by the demons or the flash bombs. There was even a cheat like shield. He thought that the expedition's concentrated firepower would destroy the shield but it didn't. This meant there was no way to attack the Rwigenberg and land. There was no way to prevent the Dark Lord's resurrection. So what was the expedition fighting for?

".....Endure. We have no choice but to endure it."

Ark murmured with a sigh after much contemplation. There was no way. Yet he still hadn't given up.

"Ark!"

Then Wormer's voice came from Curio.

"Come to Shangri-La quickly. I have something to show you!"

'Show me?'

Ark's forehead wrinkled and he turned towards Shangri-La. Ark had honestly thought there was no chance. Everyone else was the same as well. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members who had been full of will, Shambala who wanted to crush everybody, Timosi who wanted to avenge Alan, Sid who wasn't thinking about anything and the other soldiers..... Their motivation was lost after seeing Rwigenberg's cheat like shield. But now Wormer's words were vivid in his mind. Wormer had converted Shangri-La along with the raccoons and the Magic Institute engineers. He sensed something in this desperate moment.

'Did he perhaps figure out a way?'

Ark had such expectations after hearing Wormer's voice.

"Burning Soul, head to Shangri-La!"

Ark immediately turned Burning Soul and flew towards Shangri-La. He landed in front of the White Tower and entered the control room (central office of the White Tower).

"Ark-nim!"

Lariette and the prophet clan greeted him as he entered the control room. Lariette and the prophets had been riding on Shangri-La. This was the power source to move the huge land mass that was Shangri-La. As an aside, there were two reasons why the 7 heroes decided to hide the Ark of Creation in Shangri-La. One reason was to protect the Ark of Creation from the demons. Another reason was that the Ark of Creation was the power source for Shangri-La's defense ward. That's right. The reason it was about to float hundreds of metres in the air and raise the defense ward was thanks to the Ark of Creation. After Lariette had removed the Ark of Creation, Shangri-La's defense ward was released which allowed Alan to slaughter the prophets.

..... Well, that wasn't important now. Ark exchanged nods and approached Wormer.

"Wormer, what did you want to show me?"

"It is this."

Wormer pointed towards a huge crystal. To be exact, it was the modified Truth Crystal that linked to the Creator's will. When Ark looked doubtfully at the truth crystal, Wormer operated something small at the bottom of the crystal. A video instantly appeared on the Truth Crystal. It was the image of when Shangri-La and the airships attacked Rwigenberg. Despite the huge shock and heat wave, Rwigenberg had just shaken off the attack. Watching it just made him feel despair again.

"Why are you showing me this?"

Ark asked with a frown. Wormer scratched his messy hair and muttered.

"Do you see the output of the Ruin Gun mounted on Shangri-La?"

The Ruin Gun was the huge gun turret that Wormer and the Magic Institute joined forces to engineer. But Ark didn't understand anything about the output of the Ruin Gun. Despite the name, it was just an extremely large magic gun. Ark shook his head and Wormer replied.

"It is 200,000 MG. There were a total of 34 shots. The total output reached 6.8 million MG."

It was amazing. Everybody would understand how frightening that was. Yet even the terrifying power of the Ruin Guns didn't break Rwigenberg's shield? But why did Wormer call him here just to boast about the output from the Ruin Gun?

"The Spear of Thor designed by the Magic Institute has an output of 70,000~100,000 MG. The normal magic guns on the airships have an output of 4,000 MG while the ones on the hot air balloons are roughly 2,500 MG. In other words, the total firepower is approximately 10 million MG."

“.....So?”

Ark asked with a dumb expression. Wormer shouted angrily.

“You idiot, you still don’t understand? 10 million MG, 10 million MG! Do you know how many zeroes are attached to that number? Seven. Seven! That is an astronomical amount of magic energy. That amount of MG is enough to evaporate a whole territory! In theory, that amount of magic energy should be enough to defeat any shield in New World.”

Wormer explained frantically while spitting. Once again, New World was an online game. In other words, the laws could be different from reality. But no matter what happened here, one swing of a sword wouldn’t be able to kill hundreds of enemies. This was the most fundamental law of New World. These laws existed to maintain New World’s balance. If these laws collapsed then New World couldn’t be called a game anymore. Wormer and the engineers from the Magic Institute were convinced that 10 million MG should be enough to penetrate Rwigenberg’s shield. No material or magic existed in New World that could thwart a concentrated attack of 10 million MG.

“But Rwigenberg’s shield didn’t break?”

“That’s right. It is strange.”

Wormer nodded and replied to Ark’s question.

“It goes against the fundamental laws of New World. Then the Rwigenberg is an existence where the laws of New World aren’t applied to it. But after thinking about it carefully, I realized that it was different.”

Ark also agreed with the idea. Ark was one of the few people who knew most of the information related to this event. The Red Man was the alter ego of New World’s creator, Park Woo-seong! The reason the Rwigenberg could withstand that attack was probably because of something Park Woo-seong did. Park Woo-seong was New World’s creator so he would be able to make a cheat like shield.

‘But the Red Man’s ability isn’t limitless. If he had the ability to do whatever he wanted to the system then he wouldn’t need to use this method to achieve his goals.’

That’s right. If the Red Man was able to exert a tremendous power over New World then he wouldn’t need to resurrect the Dark Lord. Couldn’t he just ruin New World by connecting to the main server? Despite that, the Red Man had used the complicated method of resurrecting the demons and using Alan to distract the users as well as stealing the devil’s heart. He had carefully pushed forward his plan step by step. Then it was obvious.

“I don’t know why but the Red Man doesn’t have the ability of the Creator in New World!”

In other words, if his information regarding New World was removed then the Red Man was just an ordinary user. Of course, there was no denying that he had a large advantage over general users. He also couldn’t override the laws of New World. So how was it possible to have a shield that ignores New World’s laws of creation?

‘.....It is impossible.’

This meant that the laws of New World also applied to the shield. Wormer smiled after Ark reached that conclusion and nodded.

“Now you’re starting to understand the situation.”

“But actually.....”

“It doesn’t exist. That’s what I thought. Therefore I replayed the scene in the Truth Crystal over and over until I found the identity of that shield.”

“Have you ever figured out the reason?”

“I didn’t understand the first few times I watched. But I slowed the video to 1/100th of a second and was able to discover the absurd secret.”

“Absurd secret?”

“Look.”

Wormer manipulated the video before playing it again. This time it was played at 1/100th of a second so the video looked like a slide show. After a while, Ark started to see the hidden secret behind the shield.

“T-this is.....?”

“Yes, the shield doesn’t have enormous defense like we thought. No amount of defense would be able to withstand 10 million MG. I barely noticed it after playing it at 1/100th of a second. Damn, I never imagined such a method until I saw this image. Now I’ll replay the shield in real time.”

Wormer murmured with amazing as he modified the Truth Crystal again. That’s right. The Rwigenberg’s cheat like shield had a hidden secret. It wasn’t possible to see until seen through the modified Truth Crystal but more than half of the shield had melted the moment the firepower hit it. If there were continuous attacks then the defense shield would’ve probably broken. But he was able to examine the shield when it was played at 1/100th of the speed. The shield was growing back at an equal rate to the speed of the attack! When the offensive ended, the shield became thin like paper but it returned to its original form after some time passed.

“Such a thing.....?”

“My guess is that there are two possible reasons. An infinite amount of magic is currently being focused on the Rwigenberg. And the other reason is this.”

Wormer once again manipulated the Truth Crystal. Then Rwigenberg expanded and was zoomed into a large area. There was a weird scene in the middle of the area. An old man wearing a hood was standing in front of an altar. When the shield shook from the attack, the old man instantly took out a strange looking dagger and chanted a spell. Then thousands of demons gathered in the square exploded and were sucked into the altar? Wormer stopped the video there and said.

“At this point, the shield recovered extremely quickly. So I asked the Magic Institute and they said it was a black magic sacrifice ritual.”

“Black magic sacrifice ritual?”

“It changes the life energy into magic energy. That black magician is converting the demons’ lives into magic energy to heal the shield.”

An engineer from the Magic Institute replied. Ark started to understand the secret behind Rwigenberg’s shield. That’s right. The shield was invincible like Ark thought it was. The black magician sacrificed the lives of thousands to demons to instantly heal Rwigenberg’s shield.

‘I see. Therefore the Dark Lord’s resurrection time will be slightly different from the clock on my warning message.’

Ark managed to figure out one of his questions. The Dark Lord needed time to resurrect. Therefore Ark always checked the time remaining while fighting. But he noticed that time was progressing slightly more slowly than Ark’s clock. He couldn’t understand why and thought it was just an error.

‘That’s because some of the concentrated magic was used to restore the shield. Therefore the magic used for the resurrection ceremony was dispersed and the time remaining slowed. In other words, attacking the shield will also slow down the resurrection ceremony. But it will still be the same in the end if I can’t penetrate the shield.’

Ark’s eyes flashed at the thought.

“Based on the video just now, the speed that the attack destroys the shield is slightly faster than the recovery speed. If we rally the flying boat squadron to attack right afterwards then wouldn’t we be able to penetrate the shield?”

“That’s impossible.”

Wormer shook his head and answered.

“Once again, the recovery speed is so fast that we were barely able to spot it when the playback speed was 1/100th of a second. Even if the flying boat squadron attacks right afterwards then several seconds would be consumed. More than half of the shield would’ve already recovered. The attacks of the flying boat squadron won’t be able to catch up with the recovery speed.”

“Then there is no way?”

Wormer sighed and scratched his head.

“I calculated two possible methods. One is to deal continuous damage worth 1 million MG for 5 minutes. The other way is to increase the output to 11.5 million MG so that the shield doesn’t have time to recover before it breaks.”

“A continuous output of 1 million MG for 5 minutes?”

“Yes.”

“Or an output of 11.5 million MG?”

“That’s what I thought of....”

“Is that possible?”

“If the 500 hot air balloons and 30 airships from the beginning of the battle were intact then it would barely reach 11.5 million MG when combined with Shangri-La.”

Ark looked amazed at Wormer’s answer. Didn’t that mean it was only possible to crack the shield if they had attacked it from the beginning of the battle? But now 200 hot air balloons and 10 airships had been shot down during the fight. Ark hurriedly looked at the engineers from the Magic Institute.

“Does the Magic Institute have any extra airships or hot air balloons?”

“Yes. All airships were summoned by the Grandmaster but 300 hot air balloons had been dispatched somewhere else on scouting missions.

And we already sent a request to the Grandmaster for reinforcements after listening to Wormer but.....”

The Magic Institute member trailed off with a dark expression.

“The summoned air balloons will take at least 3 days to get here.”

3 days for NPCs was 24 hours. Now there was only 15 hours left until the Dark Lord was resurrected. It meant the situation would already be over by the time the hot air balloons arrived.

‘In the end, is there no way to penetrate the shield before the Dark Lord was resurrected?’

Ark sighed with a depressed expression. Despite all of Wormer’s calculations, in the end it was still hopeless.

‘.....Wait?’

Then something popped into Ark’s head.

Now, he was going to put it in order. According to Wormer’s calculations, maintaining an output of 1 million MG for 5 minutes or attacking with 11.5 million MG would melt the shield. But the air balloons from the Magic Institute required at least 24 hours to get here. If the armoured battleships attacked then a sufficient output could be reached but the Rwigenberg was floating hundreds of metres away from them.

‘If only the merchant ships had the scorch cannons. The range of the scorch cannon would allow it to attack the Rwigenberg. But the reality is that the ships would have to get pass thousands of sea monsters in order to reach Kwarian. Even if we the airships as support, the armoured ships wouldn’t be able to reach the Kwarian in 15 hours. In the end it is impossible to break the shield. But.....’

Ark recalled a memory from 2 months ago. It was the scene Ark saw when he first approached Shangri-La on board Wormer’s Taekwon V. The defense tower on Shangri-La had attacked the demons the

moment they passed the wards. There was a strong magnetic field between the defense tower and the defense ward that roasted any demons that tried to approach. He didn't understand Wormer's figure of 10 million MG but how much energy was required to turn thousands of gargoyles to dust? Ark had a crazy idea and asked Wormer. Wormer nodded and replied.

"Yes. If we use the defense ward then 1 million MG will easy come out. Like I said a while ago, the 24 Ruin Guns reached 6.8 million MG. If the burden on the source of power decreases then we can make the 1 million MG last for 5 minutes. However....."

"However? What's the problem?"

"You know, Shangri-La's previous defense ward was destroyed by Alan's surprise attack. The Magic Institute engineers had restored it. But we don't know how to activate it."

"Activate it? Didn't the prophet clan use it previously?"

"They did. But the equipment is slightly strange. Because it was broken and then restored. The circuit route which converts the magic coming from the Ark of Creation to power the ward has changed. And there is a strange lock in the middle of that circuit."

"Lock?"

"This. Have a look."

Wormer operated a small number of buttons. Then there was a mechanical sound and something rose from the bottom of the Truth Crystal. It was a circular, crystal slab. However, there were various shapes carved into the slab such as a circle, triangle, knife, water drop etc. Wormer pointed to it and said.

"Probably some devices fit in here in order to make it work. But even the prophet clan don't know what they are. So I've been looking for ways to circumvent the power circuit but even my engineering skills can't decipher it."

“Have you tried to look for information in the History Crystal?”

“Of course I tried. But the information on this crystal disc is contained inside the level 1 security area.”

Ark frowned at Wormer’s answer. A level 1 security area meant a password was needed to access the information in the History Crystal. However, if they knew the password then there would be no reason to search for information in the History Crystal. If he knew what went into the holes then he could get a sense of that the password was.

‘Eh?’

Ark suddenly blinked while he was looking at the circular slab. One hole cut in the slab had a surprisingly familiar size and shape.

‘Do I have something circular that will match with that hole? The size and shape is just like.....’

Ark gazed at it for a while before eagerly pulling something out of his bag. It was a small disc. Ark was even surer after taking out the disc. When he compared it to the hole, the disc was roughly the same size and shape. Ark placed the disc into the hole.

Cheolkeok, ku ku ku ku.

The disc started spinning once it entered the hole. At the same time, an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-You have placed Hero Maban’s Three Marvels into Shangri-La’s defense device!

Shangri-La’s powerful defense ward was made using the strong power of the 7 heroes. At that time, the 7 heroes thought of Shangri-La as the last bastion for humanity and combined their abilities to create a ward. But there was a chance that Shangri-La’s defense ward could be broken by demons and then repaired. In order to stop the demons from using it, they created a safety device. That is the defense ward’s control device.

If the 7 heroes' original device ward is destroyed then their descendants need to gather again in order to reactivate the device. Therefore the control device must be equipped with the symbols of the 7 heroes in order for the magic circuit of the defense ward to work. Once all the symbols are loaded then the magic left by the 7 heroes will be completely opened.

<Currently equipped symbol: Three Marvels (Hero Maban/Christin)>

The control device has started preparations to operate the defense ward. The navigation system of the defense ward has been triggered.

"7 heroes!"

Ark felt a flash after reading the information window. The 7 heroes were the ones who originally created Shangri-La's defense ward. Then wouldn't the descendants of the 7 heroes be the key to making it work again? That's right. Ark's Three Marvels was the symbol of Hero Maban and it was assimilated into the defense ward's control device. In the information window, it explained why the control device was restricted to the descendants of the 7 heroes. If the defense ward was destroyed then there was a chance that the demons would take over Shangri-La. Therefore the 7 heroes established a seal to prevent it from being used after it was restored. It was the result of some deep planning.

'Anyway, that doesn't matter now!'

He had figured out how to work the circular slab. However, there was still a problem to be addressed with the circular slab.

'It needs the symbol of all 7 heroes to work. But there is no guarantee that the heroes' descendants have entered this war. Even if they entered the war, they might already be dead. And how am I supposed to find them in a combat situation like this?'

However, Ark's worries were immediately settled.

"Eh? What, what the?"

“Wah, what is this? Why is my bag rumbling?”

While Ark was busy thinking. Suddenly there was an intense flash from the other 6 holes in the control device. At the same time, Lariette’s chest started glowing white while Wormer’s bag shook and had a brown glow. The freaked out Lariette and Wormer hurriedly checked the identity of the light. It was a teardrop shaped pendant hanging on Lariette’s neck and Wormer had an old brown diary that vibrated.

‘A tear shaped pendant and a square diary!’

Ark’s eyes immediately moved towards the control device. The two items fit perfectly into the holes glowing with the same coloured light.

‘There’s no doubt. The symbols that the 7 heroes left behind have started to react after the control device was activated! This must be the navigation system. But.....’

He already knew that Lariette had become a hero’s descendant after Alan. Yet he was surprised about Wormer. He never even imagined that Wormer was a hero’s descendant. Wormer noticed Ark’s surprised eyes and laughed.

“Huhuhu, I guess I can’t hide it anymore. I am the descendant of the genius dwarf inventor and hero, Hamilan.....”

“There’s no time. Hurry and insert the symbols!”

Ark shouted angrily and Wormer petulantly placed the diary into the control device. Lariette also inserted her necklace into the teardrop shaped hole. Then Ark saw that the information window had updated again.

-New symbols have been loaded onto the defense ward’s control device.

<Currently equipped symbol: Pocket Diary of a Genius Inventor (Genius engineer Hamilan)>

<Currently equipped symbol: Ronian’s Teardrop Pendant (Holy Knight

Ronian)>

'That's it! 3 out of found!'

And he had already secured another hero's symbol. Ark knew another hero's descendant, Shambala. Ark immediately used the Feather of Whispering to contact Shambala.

-Shambala, you're not dead yet?

-You bastard, are you going to keep on talking or come help?

-I am doing something. I'm busy so I'll give you the detailed information later but quickly come here!

-Eh? Come where?

-The white tower in Shangri-La. Hurry!

-Why do I have to hurry? Am I your servant now?

-It doesn't matter, just come quickly. It is important.

-.....Understood.

Shambala was about to say something but stopped after hearing Ark's serious voice. He might have a temper but Shambala was quick to notice things.

"Now, the remaining 3 symbols are the problem..... I have to figure out where they are....."

Ark murmured when he saw the empty holes in the control device. Suddenly the red light coming from the dagger shaped hole seemed to become stronger. In fact, Ark had guessed who that belonged to the moment he knew that it was for the symbols of the 7 heroes. Shambala was the descendant of the master assassin Salrin so naturally the dagger shape would belong to him.

‘The light from his hole is gradually becoming stronger? Then perhaps.....?’

He was receiving the message that Shambala was coming closer to Shambala. Then the light became stronger when it reacted to the symbols?

‘That’s right! After thinking about it, the strongest light had emitted from Lariette and Wormer’s hole just now. Obviously the light will become stronger the closer the symbol gets. Then?’

Ark looked at the still unknown three holes. The light there was similar to the standard before Shambala started moving. In other words, the rest of the heroes were close to the place Shambala used to be before he started moving.

‘That means the rest of the heroes’ descendants have entered the war and are still alive!’

Ark immediately left the white tower. He jumped on Burning Soul who was waiting in front of the tower and shouted.

“Curio, disperse all bats on the battlefield right now. Tell them to look in the water and the air and locate the position of anyone who is emitting light!”

“I understand Master. Hey you children, you have a new job!”

Curio ordered all his subordinates to search. At the same time, the voices of the leaders stopped emerging from Curio’s mouth. The 10 subordinates left the NPCs and started to search the battlefield. Therefore Ark couldn’t grasp the situation of the air fleet anymore but that wasn’t important now. Curio murmured in his ear after a while.

“Master, my subordinate has found someone.”

“Where?”

"In the sea. Two people are on the Bristania flagship that is surrounded by demons. 800 metres away at your 7 o'clock."

"Okay. Burning Soul, let's go!"

Kurarara, kurarara!

Ark grabbed Burning Soul's horns and flew away. While he was riding away, Shambala who had just arrived at the white tower shouted.

"Hey! I thought you were busy so where are you going?"

"There's no time to explain. Go inside and Lariette will tell you!"

Ark didn't even bother looking back and just yelled as he flew off. An information window appeared shortly afterwards.

-New symbols have been loaded onto the defense ward's control device.
<Currently equipped symbol: Blood of the Dead (Assassin Master Salrin)>

Shambala had also inserted his symbol on the circular slab.

"It worked. Now I just have to find the remaining 3....."

Ark muttered as he observed the battlefield where several battleships were fighting with demons. A battleship surrounded by jellyfish caught his eye. It was the flagship of the Bristania expedition. And two lights were shining from the deck of the battleship.

"Over there! Blade Tempest!"

Ark pushed back the swarming demons with Blade Tempest and landed on the deck. And a voice rang out across the boat.

"The person who has a light shining from his body please come here!"

"Beast Spirit possession, rise power of the dog! What? Light? Are you talking about me?"

“High speed intonation, fire, ice! Damn, what the? Why is light coming from my body? Won’t this just catch the demons’ eyes even more? Eh, that guy is.....?”

Two people who were fiercely fighting the demons turned around at Ark’s shout. Ark’s eyes widened as he caught sight of them.

“Aren’t you Ark?”

“Eh? Why are you here?”

“Bread, Redian? You guys were heroes’ descendants?”

Ark muttered with a foolish expression. That’s right. The pair fighting on Bristania’s flagship was the Beast Master Bread and the Elemental Master Redian. Ark checked the light coming from both of their bags.

.....Bread and Redian were heroes’ descendants.

“Heroes’ Descendants? Well, we are but how did you know that?”

“There’s no time to explain. Quickly get on!”

“What? Get on what? Can’t you see the situation?”

“If we go then the flagship won’t be able to hold on and will sink.”

“This is more urgent than saving the flagship! Burning Soul!”

It was quite unexpected that Bread and Redian were heroes’ descendants. However, now wasn’t the time to explain the details of the situation. Ark directed Burning Soul towards Bread and Redian and used Riposte. Then he immediately grabbed the two and flew into the sky.

“Hey! What is going on?”

“I said there’s no time to explain.”

Ark placed the struggling Bread on the back. Then Curio opened his eyes and shouted.

“Master, I found the last person. 100 metres from Shangri-La in the 11 o’clock direction!”

“Well done. Burning Soul, let’s finish this!”

Ark flew Burning Soul towards the area specified by Curio. After a while, the hero’s descendant he saw in that place was even more unexpected than Bread and Redian. Riding a flying boat and shooting arrows blindly....no, Ark was surprised as he knew her. No, she was someone that had been in Ark’s vicinity a lot.

“Timosi.....you?”

Ark checked the light coming from her bag and murmured in a dumbfounded voice. That’s right. The last hero’s descendant was the Dark Elf Timosi.

“You idiot, where did you go? The demons revived while you were gone! Furthermore, the shield around Rwigenberg doesn’t even have a scratch on it..... Damn, everything is a mess! How am I supposed to get revenge for Alan? Matanyi Shooter no. 1, Devil Penetrating Arrow!”

Timosi cursed as she shot her arrows. Ark who was watching blankly smiled and answered.

“If you want to make sure Maseutyu and the Red Man pays then I’ll help you.”

“What? How?”

“Just come with me!”

Ark turned Burning Soul and headed towards Shangri-La. After a while Ark, Bread, Redian and Timosi touched down in front of the white tower. He used a simple explanation to ensure the three descendants

understood the situation. Then Bread, Redian and Timosi placed their symbols in the control device.

-All 7 symbols have been equipped.

The message window renewed in front of everybody.

-New symbols have been loaded onto the defense ward's control device.

<Currently equipped symbol: Tank Bracelet (King of Beasts Kalgaradon)>

<Currently equipped symbol: Spirit Talisman (Elemental Valkyrie Shura)>

<Currently equipped symbol: Rune of an Ancient Elf (Elf Archer Electric)>

-All the hero's symbols have been loaded onto Shangri-La's defense ward control device.

<Shangri-La's magic circuit has connected and the defense ward reactivated>

<The magic of the heroes sealed in Shangri-La has been released>

At that moment, seven colours flashed from the control device. Then intense sparks occurred and spread from the circuit through the tower. Wormer who was watching the Truth Crystal cheered.

"That's it. The defense system of Shangri-La is working!"

The heroes' descendants gathered in the tower simultaneously looked at the Truth Crystal. The Truth Crystal showed the situation that was happening in Shangri-La.

Snap, snap, snap!

The sparks extended from the white tower towards dozens of defense towers. At the same time, the defense towers that were wrapped in

sparks started having the circles at the top spinning and giving off a huge amount of discharge. The sparks shot like a lightning bolt towards the next defense towers. Then onto the next one.....dozens of defense towers were connected by the sparks. The defense towers had started to show their power.

-Kurwarwarwarwa!

While the expedition army had been mired in despair, hundreds of demons had been pushing towards Shangri-La. The gun turrets had been intercepted the scorch cannon blasts so it was helpless against the demons. But once the defense towers linked, thousands of sparks flew towards the demons.

-Kwaaaaa!

Hundreds of demons had their health drained from the lightning attack and turned to ash. This was the defense ward that Wormer and the Magic Institute upgraded! Wormer excitedly clamoured inside the white tower.

“Hohoho! This, this! Isn’t this great? Isn’t it better than ever? This is the result of my genius skill. The defense towers are restored and the output is steadily increasing. The fact that I couldn’t use the defense ward had been upsetting me..... Anyway, if it is this degree than 1 million MG will be easy. Well, shall we head towards the Rwigenberg?”

Wormer smirked and operated the controls. The magic engines of Shangri-La started working and it rushed towards the Rwigenberg. Despite the sudden rush towards the Rwigenberg, there was still time for the demons to approach them. However, the demons’ attacks didn’t matter now that the defense ward was operated. Any demons that approached Shangri-La’s fearful defense were turned to ash. Whether it was hundreds of thousands, any demon that entered the defense ward was 100% roasted. While the demons were hopeless, the Rwigenberg had fired the scorch cannons. However, even the flash bombs were destroyed by Shangri-La’s defense ward. After rushing for around 10 minutes.

1 kilometre, 500 metres, 300 metres.....

Shangri-La gradually narrowed the distance and collided with Rwigenberg's shield.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

At the same time there was a tremendous roar and Shangri-La shook. Ark, Shambala, Lariette, Wormer, Bread, Redian and Timosi inside the white tower were able to see what happened through the Truth Crystal.

"Melting! Rwigenberg's shield is melting!"

The lightning bolts from the defense towers were attacking Rwigenberg's shields. As soon as it touched it, the shield started to melt like water. Of course the shield was being repaired at the same time but it couldn't keep up with the damage.

"Raise the output!"

Wormer and the Magic Institute engineers made small modifications. Shangri-La shook and pressed forward even harder. After a while..... The shield was unable to keep up and Shangri-La gradually surged inside. And the shaking became even worse.

"Pretty soon.....pretty soon.....now.....eh, what the?"

Suddenly Shangri-La was hit by something.

"T-that bastard.....!"

Wormer gnashed his teeth together. Wormer was looking at the Rwigenberg through the Truth Crystal. No, to be exact he was looking at the black magician wearing a hood. When the old man swung his dagger, thousands of demons were sucked into the altar. At the same time, the area of the shield that Shangri-La was pushing against became stronger.

"He is using the health of the demons to amplify the recovery speed of the shield in this area!"

"So even Shangri-La's defense ward can't break it?"

"I don't know. At its maximum output, the defense wards can overpower the recovery speed of the shield but then it will overload in the next few minutes. If we fail to destroy the shield before that happens then Shangri-La will be smashed!"

Ark stared at the Truth Crystal. He had to do something. The black magician was strengthening Rwigenberg's shield. If he couldn't penetrate the shield then he couldn't stop the black magician.

"Keep rushing!"

"If we continue rushing without taking any measures then it is highly likely that we will be smashed."

"It will be the same even if we leave. If that has to happen then it is better to die while breaking the shield."

"Heh, I knew you would say that. You are a true man. Let's go and die!"

Wormer laughed at Ark's answer. At the same time, Shangri-La's engines roared even more fiercely and it rushed forward. The fate of the Kwarian battle depended on whether this shield broke.

Act 3: Charge, Charge, Charge!

"Huck, huck, huck!"

Someone was breathing roughly in a dark space. The man's eyes, nose and mouth was covered with a cloth as he dug above him with a shovel. How long had he spent just shovelling? Blisters would appear

and disappear until he learnt the 'shovelling' skill. After that, his skill understandably became more sharp and natural. He breathed accurately as he shovelled between bricks! Any ordinary wall would've collapsed after being dug at with a sharp shovel for a long time. But the wall the man was digging at didn't even look like it had a dent in it.

"Damn, just open even a little bit!"

The man growled angrily as he slammed the shovel into the ceiling. Then a pile of dust poured down.

"Cough, cough.....t-this is.....cough....."

The dust covered man coughed and withdrew. He took off the cloth and revealed his face. He then gazed towards a place where dozens of people were gathered. However, they were just staring blankly. The man stared at them angrily.

'Damn, why? They're messing with the wrong guy.'

"Hey, maknae (youngest). Why don't I hear you shovelling?"

One of them turned to him and asked. The man's face crumpled before he replied.

"There's some dust falling down hyung-nim. I will start again right now."

"Work hard. Your hyungnims are bored."

"I understand."

The man held the shovel and started working again.

'Dammit, I was called the ghost of the police agency and now I'm a criminal's minion.....'

The man thought angrily as he lifted his shovel. The police agency's ghost!

That's right. The man's identity was none other than the special agent of the cyber division, Isyuram. But why was Isyuram shovelling at the ceiling in a dark room? Isyuram had to go back a few months in order to explain. In fact, the situation for Isyuram completely changed after obtaining the video. It was expected that Isyuram would finish the infiltration investigation at this stage. He thought the full scale of the organization would be revealed after the police detectives watched the hideout 24 hours a day. However, most of the criminals were surprisingly cautious. The organization members at the hideout never once made contact with Jepeteu. He couldn't discontinue the investigation until Jepeteu was caught. Therefore he had immediately resumed the investigation after helping Ark recapture Silvana. However, he needed to join the criminal organization to get the information he wanted. After the video was obtained and a subordinate capture, the criminal organization had become even more careful. Therefore Isyuram had gone through some painful efforts over the past few months to gain their trust.

'.....Every day was humiliating.'

A sigh naturally flowed from Isyuram's mouth as he thought about it again. That's right. Every day over the last few months had been humiliating for Isyuram. Once again, getting information about Jepeteu wasn't easy unless he was in the organization. Furthermore, quite a few members of the organization still saw Isyuram as an 'outsider.' So Isyuram knew that he needed to gain the trust of the organization first. After reuniting with Jepeteu again, Isyuram suggested that he wanted to join the criminal organization.

"Hmm, you want to formally join our organization?"

"Yes. I'll like to formally enter the organization so that I can sincerely call you hyungnim."

"Well, your intentions are admirable....."

Jepeteu scratched his head as he gazed at Isyuram. Then Garam who believed that Isyuram was a friend of the heart interrupted.

“Jepeteu hyungnim, Isyuram is a totally reliable guy. Don’t you know after seeing hyungnim in the meantime? A guy like this won’t be easy to find. And Isyuram has already revealed his address and phone number to us. I know that hyungnim is worried but how can you be when he made his address and telephone number public?”

“.....I guess so.”

Jepeteu nodded. No matter how much they acted together in the game, there was a difference between being a friend or an organization member. The criminal organization didn’t accept anyone who didn’t disclose their personal information. So Isyuram had told Jepeteu his address and phone number in advance. Of course, Jepeteu didn’t really have his address and phone number. That information was something fake that the police agency had authorized. Anyway, giving his address and phone number solved any doubts.

“That idiot was arrested last month so we’re down one member. But it is impossible to explain everything in detail. We can’t just accept an outsider so easily.”

“If hyungnim calls then I’ll drop everything to come running.”

Isyuram quickly replied to Jepeteu. This was exactly what he wanted. If he met Jepeteu outside then wouldn’t everything end? However, it wasn’t resolved that easily.

“That is a bit..... Okay, then let’s do this. Life in the organization isn’t as simple as you think. You might think that we just play the game and earn money but it’s not like that. We need professionals with specialized knowledge. I have to confirm whether you can adapt to life in the organization.”

“T-then?”

“I’ll be watching and if you adapt within one or two months then I will formally accept you into the organization.”

‘That’s it. Soon I will know the information about the organization!’

Isyuram inwardly cried out with joy at Jepeteu's suggestion. However, that didn't take long to change to screams.

"Hey Isyuram. Give me some water."

"Hyungnim is covered in dust. Hurry and get it off me."

"What are you doing? If hyungnim gets out a cigarette then you should automatically offer a fire."

After Isyuram became a probationary member, the attitude towards him changed by 180 degrees. When he was a colleague then they treated him with a small amount of respect but once he joined they treated Isyuram like a minion. It was to educate Isyuram about his ranking in the group. Therefore Isyuram started the life of a minion. He had to be resolute if he wanted to succeed in the infiltration investigation. But it was difficult once he actually experience it. He was sent on various errands, cursed at and was beaten up under the excuse of training. There was a few times where he wanted to give up the infiltration in order to kill all of them.

'Patience, by patient. This is a job. I have to endure it. If I get angry then I'll lose.'

No matter the humiliation, Isyuram endured it all without a single cry. And his efforts were rewarded after a few months.

"Well, I've been watching and you really are quite useable. Okay, if it is this degree then you will fit within the organization. I'll see you sometime outside in the near future. Then you will formally join the organization."

He finally had the chance to arrest Jepeteu.

'Huhuhu, when will he come out? I'll make him pay for the humiliation.'

He would shut Jepeteu up in a dim room (interrogation) and beat him up. But there still remained one trail for Isyuram. In fact, this time the criminal organization was just killing time in New World. Originally

they started New World in order to launder money. However, martial law was initiated in the game so it was difficult to launder money since trade was prohibited and the value of gold also fell on the auction site. Then Takosu made a proposal.

“Hyungnim, shall we excavate a dungeon I found?”

“Excavate a dungeon?”

“It is difficult to go anywhere with the expedition army fighting the demons. But the expedition army didn’t find the dungeon. If we’re lucky then we can gain some items in the dungeon, earn money and even level up. So isn’t it like killing three birds with one stone? Recently there is no income so making a livelihood is difficult.”

“That’s not bad? Where is the dungeon?”

“Yes. I found it in the northern desert a while ago.”

Takosu smiled and replied. The members of the criminal organization didn’t like meeting other players. Well, it was natural since they were criminals. Therefore they were normally in areas that didn’t have a lot of players such as the northern desert in the Sinius Principality. And Takosu had found a weird old castle in one corner of the desert. It was a castle that looked hundreds of years old! Of course, it wasn’t rare to find dungeons shaped like castles in New World. The problem was that he had crossed that area a short time ago and the castle hadn’t been there. In other words, an old castle had suddenly appeared in the middle of the desert in a few days.

“That castle definitely wasn’t there before. Then we might be the first people to enter the dungeon. Hopefully we can get huge shares of profit between us.”

“There’s no need to hesitate. Okay, let’s go!”

The criminals departed towards the castle in the desert. The Sinius Principality was empty of demons thanks to the expedition’s victory. Thanks to the expedition army clearing the demons, the

criminals arrived at the desert in the Sinius Principality with no problems.

"Now, let's charge in. Treasures are waiting for us!"

Jepeteu shouted and led his subordinates towards the old castle. They were imagining the treasures piled up in the castle.....

But the sense of expectation soon turned to disappointment after entering the castle.

"What? Isn't it empty?"

"Did someone else already enter this castle?"

"Dammit, did we come here in vain?"

The expected treasures and monsters inside the temple couldn't be seen.

"But I don't see any traces of other people."

"Then where are the monsters?"

"Perhaps there is a secret passageway leading towards the real dungeon?"

"Hmm, I have heard things like that before. Somethings it might look like there is nothing but there is actually a secret passage. Okay, go search."

The criminals started to search around the area. After a moment, one of the warriors examining a wall shouted.

"Hyungnim, there is a secret passage here!"

"Oho, indeed.....does the secret passage lead to the basement? Somehow I can smell treasure."

The criminals dived into the basement.

-Grrrrrrrr!

.....It was a mistake. They were surrounded by a huge number of demons once they entered the basement. The basement was filled with intricate passages and the number of demons that appeared wasn't easy to face.

"Huck! H-hyungnim, we can't stop these guys!"

The criminal group wasn't that high levelled thanks to the Demonic War. Therefore the criminals couldn't face the demons flowing out.

"D-damn. Let's run!"

Jepeteu hurriedly screamed. However, the castle basement had a complex structure like a maze. Furthermore, only a few of the criminals wanted to go explore the dungeon. In addition, the demons had blocked the exit so they couldn't escape from the dungeon. They wandered around lost while avoiding the demons and soon reached a critical condition.

"Ugh, we'll be wiped out at this rate!"

"Hyung-nim, this way!"

Takosu shouted while standing in front of a small stone room. The group quickly ran into the room and Takosu operated the switch. Then a thick iron door fell with a roar.

"W-we lived!"

Now the group could take a break. But after sighing with relief, they realized that the situation wasn't over.

"Wait? How are we going to leave?"

The group instantly became distressed. The door was able to block the demons. But they were stuck in the stone room at the same time. If they opened the door to leave then the demons would just kill them.

"Do we have to just die?"

Jepeteu worried about it for a while. Then Garam shook his head with a serious expression.

“But didn’t we register our resurrection place in the south of the Sinius Principality? The expedition members are crowded there right now. If we resurrect while being chaotic then everything will be ruined. We will also drop equipment since we are chaotic.”

“But we can’t just rot here!”

Jepeteu shouted angrily. Then Takosu offered another idea.

“Wait? This is a stone room on the 1st floor underground. And weren’t there no demons upstairs?”

Then if we bore through the ceiling then we should be able to escape the demons.

“Bore through the ceiling? Is that possible?”

“The entire ceiling shouldn’t be made out of stone. If we take off a few stones from the ceiling then the rest is likely to be dust. Isn’t it better to take a little time to escape than to die?”

“That makes sense.”

Jepeteu nodded and agreed. Thus the party was determined to dig through the first floor ceiling. Naturally, the task of digging through the ceiling was left to the maknae Isyuram. This was the story of Isyuram’s painful fate. Isyuram had been shovelling for five days. However, the ceiling was still strong and the group could barely climb halfway. Isyuram’s blood pressure had already crossed 200 from being a minion and now he had to keep on digging.

“Hey maknae, when will you hyungnims be able to see the sun?”

‘Dammit, they’ll see. Sooner or later I’ll make it so that they won’t be able to see sunlight for their entire life.’

“I’m working hard hyungnims!”

Despite grinding his teeth fiercely, Isyuram replied with a fake bright expression. Then he pushed all his anger into the ceiling and hit it with all his strength.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

There was a tremendous roar and the stone room started shaking. Cracks spread throughout the stone room and stones fell from the ceiling like hail. The criminals screamed and ran around the room.

“Wah! What, what, what the?”

“Isyuram, what did you do?”

“Are you trying to bury us?”

“Ah, no, I didn’t mean to…….”

Isyuram who avoided the stones tried to explain but suddenly stopped. He suddenly felt some wind flowing in from somewhere. There was a stone room underground so there was no place for the wind to enter. Then? Isyuram hurriedly raised his eyes.

“The ceiling is……?”

That’s right. Isyuram had finally dug through the ceiling! After 5 hard days of shovelling, half of the stones in the ceiling had fallen down. Only a thin slab with cracks in it appeared after the ceiling had fallen. The wind was coming through those cracks from the outside.

“That’s good! Now we can get out!”

“W-what?”

Jepeteu and the criminals gathered after hearing his words. They shouted with joy after confirming the cracked ceiling.

“Waaaaah Isyuram! You finally did it!”

“Okay, then let’s leave! Isyuram, break through the ceiling!”

“Understood!”

After experiencing a range of emotions over the last 5 days, Isyuram gripped his shovel tightly and nodded. He looked at the ceiling with eyes that showed his every humiliation and shouted.

“Haaayaahh, shoryuken!”

Isyuram had become one with the shovel and attacked perfectly. The shovel crashed into the ceiling. After a short time, Isyuram’s anger filled shovel finally drove through the ceiling.

“Ugh!”

He suddenly heard screams from outside.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

There was a huge roar and the ground shook up and down.

“The no 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 defense towers have overloaded!”

“Shangri-La is shaking excessively. It won’t hold on much longer!”

The engineers from the Magic Institute shouted desperately. Wormer frantically manipulated and modified several things before yelling.

“Not yet, not yet! That Shangri-La that I converted isn’t that weak!”

“Even if you say so.....”

“Shut up, shut up, you’re noisy! Press on!”

Wormer made Shangri-La continue rushing. In this situation there was no other choice. But no matter how hard he looked, the present situation was hopeless.

“Is it really impossible?”

Ark bit his lip and looked at the Truth Crystal. The state of Shangri-La shown in the Truth Crystal was terrible. After colliding with Rwigenberg's shield, the sparking towers were overloaded and emitting black smoke. In such a situation, Shangri-La.....

"That damn old man!"

Ark glared at the old man standing near the altar on Rwigenberg.

"The black souls of those born in darkness....."

The black magician changed the spell and waved his dagger. That's right. The present situation was because of that black magician. Shangri-La's defense ward should exceed the shield's recovery rate according to Wormer's calculations. In fact, the defense ward had actually melted Rwigenberg's shield and had been slowly entering. But that damn black magician had sacrificed the lives of the demons to amplify the recovery rate in that specific area. Therefore the recovery rate of the shield became faster than the damage from the defense ward. The result was shown in the Truth Crystal.

"What is that guy's identity? Why is he doing nonsense like this?"

Bread asked with an absurd expression. Then Timosi glared at the Truth Crystal and muttered.

"He is the Archbishop of the dark church, Maseutyu."

"The archbishop of the dark church?"

"He is the guy who dragged Alan into darkness and betrayed him."

Timosi replied though clenched teeth. Ark opened his mouth to reply to Timosi.

"The black magician is starting the ceremony again!"

"If the recovery rate of the shield is amplified again then the defense ward won't be able to hold on anymore!"

An engineer from the Magic Institute screamed. Ark flinched and gazed at the scene of the magician wielding his dagger in the Truth Crystal. Like the engineer said, if the shield was amplified even more then everything was over. Shangri-La who rushed in would be shattered and would disappear without a trace.

‘If we can’t stop that black magician.....’

Ark’s mouth dried up. Then Bread who had been watching the Truth Crystal shouted.

“Why are we just letting the old man do what he wants?”

“You idiot, do you have a brain at all? Please think for a moment. Do you think we want to do nothing? If we can’t penetrate the shield then how can we kill the old man?”

Redian cursed after hearing Bread’s words. But nobody else could say anything to Bread. This was a serious situation.

‘Do we have to just sit and watch as Shangri-La is destroyed?’

Maseutyu’s sacrifice ritual was almost over. The lives of thousands of demons would be consumed and the shield recovery rate boosted.

“.....Great powers of darkness, I offer you these fallen souls.....!”

Maseutyu’s spell was completed. No, the moment it was about to be complete. Something metallic suddenly appeared beneath Maseutyu’s feet. And it hit exactly between his legs?

“Ugh!”

Maseutyu who was reciting the spell shrieked. At the same time, all the men watching through the Truth Crystal simultaneously let out a groan.

“Ow!”

A pain that only men could share! Although he was the enemy, they could all sympathize with the enormous pain. But now wasn’t the time

to worry about the pain. He didn't know what had emerged from Maseutyu's feet. However, it was still good.

"The ceremony has been suspended!"

"The amplification speed of the shield is sharply falling!"

Ark turned his head after hearing Wormer and the engineers' words.

"Charge!"

"I know. Increase Shangri-La's defense wards to the maximum output! Attack!"

Wormer manipulated the buttons at a frantic speed and shouted. Shangri-La's defense wards emitted an intense lightning attack at the same time. Shangri-La's attack started to overwhelm the shield and it began to dissolve. After a while, the surface of the shield became as thin as paper as Shangri-La pushed inside. And it felt like the shield had broken as Shangri-La steadily advanced.

"Oooh.....!"

Maseutyu couldn't understand what had just happened. If he had completed the sacrificial offering then Shangri-La would be turned to dust. However, he had suddenly been hit 'there' by a tremendous force. Maseutyu's spirit automatically flew away to Andromeda. Any man would react the same as Maseutyu.

"What on earth.....?"

Maseutyu who was rolling around on the ground finally recovered slightly and determined what had hit him.

".....Shovel?"

Maseutyu murmured in a dumbfounded voice. That's right. Maseutyu had been hit 'there' by a shovel that had emerged from the ground. Why the hell would a shovel emerge to hit 'that' place? Maseutyu couldn't understand the situation. Then the ground where the shovel emerged from started to shake. And a man slowly crawled out.

"Eh? Where are we?"

The man covered in dust looked around restlessly. The man was Isyuram who had been concentrating on shovelling for 5 days.

"Isyuram, what the? Get out of the way!"

Then dozens of other people crawled out from the hole. It was Jepeteu and his group of criminals. How on earth did Isyuram and the criminal organization emerge from Maseutyu's feet? The reason was simple. In fact, the Red Man had hidden the Rwigenberg in a corner of the northern desert in order to hide it from the expedition army. Rwigenberg had been buried beneath the sand until only the castle was left exposed. That's right. The old castle the criminals found was the castle built on Rwigenberg's back. That was the reason why the criminals couldn't find any treasures or monsters inside the old castle. The Red Man owned the property so it wouldn't have any treasures or monsters. The demons were gathered in the basement so they didn't spot the criminals until they entered the basement. However, no one would've imagined that the criminal group would have entered the stone room and be trapped inside. The Rwigenberg had flown to Kwarian shortly afterwards in order to start the resurrection ceremony while Isyuram was digging through the ceiling. When Shangri-La had collided with Rwigenberg, the impact had caused part of the ceiling to collapse. But Maseutyu couldn't know such matters.

"Y-you guys..... What on earth? Why that place.....did you come out?"

Maseutyu grinded his teeth together as he glared at them. He had been hit in 'that' place by the shovel.

"What's with that old man?"

“Why is he glaring at us?”

“Why is the mood turning uncomfortable?”

The wanted criminals muttered as they stared at Maseutyu.

“Y-you guys....what you did.....how dare.....I’m going to kill you!”

Maseutyu said angrily as he chanted a spell.

“Ack! That old man is a magician!”

“Damn, what the hell is going on? Who is that guy and where is this place? Why is everything strange?”

“We’ll check it later. Just kill that old man for the moment!”

The criminals hurriedly pulled out their weapons.

“Impertinent....I’ll crush you like mayflies....huck!”

Maseutyu flinched and stopped chanting his spell. Then he recited another spell at tremendous speed and disappeared.

“Eh? Warp magic?”

“What the! Why is he running away?”

“Huck! H-h-h-hyungnim!”

Takosu turned his head and stuttered with a sickly expression. Jepeteu and the other criminals also turned their heads and paled.

“W-what is going on?”

A huge land mass was reflected in the eyes of the criminals. A land mass at least 1 kilometre in size was rushing towards them. That’s right. It was Shangri-La who had rushed through Rwigenberg’s shield after Maseutyu’s spell was interrupted. Maseutyu had seen it and escaped using Warp.

“Huck! S-scatter!”

“I-it’s too late.....”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The criminals’ cries of distress were buried under the loud roaring sound. Isyuram who had played a vital role in interrupting the ritual and allowed Shangri-La to penetrate Rwigenberg’s shield. However, they were rewarded by being squished between Shangri-La and Rwigenberg. This was the moment when another history originated in New World.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Shangri-La was a 1 kilometre land mass while the Rwigenberg was several kilometres wide. The two objects with an astronomical mass collided in the air. The whole space shook and a roaring sound swept through the battlefield. The shock wave spread and the airships and demons fighting moved like they were fighting on stormy seas. The aftermath around the crash was crazy. More than half of Shangri-La had been destroyed by the collision. Cracks also spread on the white tower because of the impact.

“Danger!”

“Owaaaaah!”

The heroes’ descendants and the engineers fell and rolled all over the place. However, Ark grabbed the control device firmly and stared at the Truth Crystal.

‘Unbelievable.....!’

Ark moaned as the dust disappeared and the scene was revealed on the crystal. After melting the shield with the lightning attack, Shangri-La

had crashed into the side of the Rwigenberg. More than half of Shangri-La broke from the impact. It was natural. This was a massive conflict.

“Ah ah ah, S-Shangri-La.....the legacy of the ancient prophet clan.....”

“Damn, the Shangri-La that I meticulously converted.....my aerial fortress that is a man’s dream.....”

The prophet clan and Wormer murmured as they yanked the hair on their heads. The problem was that only Shangri-La was being smashed. Was it due to the shield? Or the defense of Rwigenberg’s shield transcended imagination? The exact reason was unknown but Rwigenberg was still fine. Of course, it had collided with Shangri-La directly so the top part of the building had been crushed. Rwigenberg was also gushing blood from a cut in its side. But when looking at Rwigenberg’s huge figure, it was just a scar. Despite Shangri-La being smashed into its side, the Rwigenberg was still flying. Ark thought it was slightly disappointing that the Rwigenberg didn’t crash.

‘At least the defense shield is pierced!’

He had still achieved his purpose.

“No. 1 system out, no. 2 system out, no. 3 system out.”

“All the circuits connected to the Ark of Creation have stopped working.”

“The buoyancy of Shangri-La has been destroyed. We’re going to fall within a few minutes!”

The voice of the Magic Institute’s engineers shook his ears.

“Damn, there’s no room to breathe. Everybody escape from Shangri-La!”

“To where?”

“.....There’s only one place we can go.”

Ark looked at the Rwigenberg through the Truth Crystal and replied. That’s right. There was only one place where Ark’s group could

go. If Shangri-La collided with the Rwigenberg and fell with them still in it then the mission would still be a failure. Even though the altar was hit, it hadn't been completely destroyed. There was a huge amount of magic concentrated on the Rwigenberg so the shield would slowly recover. Of course, the shield would be weaker than before but it would be impossible to shoot down the Rwigenberg within the time limit. There was only one way left!

"We just have to prevent the resurrection ceremony directly!"

"Stop it directly? I like it. In the end I wanted that as well."

Bread grabbed his greatsword and laughed.

"There's no time. Quickly!"

"Good. Let's go!"

Each of the heroes' descendants took out their weapons and followed Ark. Then Lariette and the prophet clan shouted.

"Wait, I have to take the Ark of Creation!"

"That's right. I almost forgot. Where is the Ark of Creation?"

"It's in the underground power chamber."

"Underground power chamber....."

Ark narrowed his eyes and muttered. He forgot because the Ark of Creation had been used as a power source for Shangri-La but it was one of the key weapons in the Demonic War. It couldn't be allowed to be destroyed with Shangri-La. There was no guarantee what would happen to it if it stayed within the underground room.

'This is the middle of enemy lines.'

The Ark of Creation can stop the effect of the Demonic Sphere of influence within 10 kilometres! He couldn't give up such an artifact when he had to plunge into enemy lines. Of course, he couldn't use it

while the Ark of Creation was a power source for Shangri-La. But now the circuits were destroyed so it couldn't be used as a power source anymore.

'The reason Shangri-La hasn't fallen immediately is because it is stuck in the Rwigenberg. The Ark of Creation would be no use if left inside Shangri-La's power room.'

Ark hurriedly organized the situation.

"Shambala and Bread, you take the others and escape towards the Rwigenberg first. I'll go and retrieve the Ark of Creation with Lariette and the prophet clan."

"Understood."

Shambala and Bread led the White Tiger clan and the Magic Institute's engineers outside. At the same time, Ark headed towards the underground power chamber with Lariette and the prophet clan. He saw the Ark of Creation shining brilliantly on an altar and took it.

Ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku!

Then the power chamber shook violently and the walls cracked. Shangri-La's collapse quickly accelerated.

"Hurry!"

The prophet clan holding the Ark of Creation quickly ran out after hearing Ark's words. The situation was even more situation when they went outside. The ground had split here and there and sparks were flying up everywhere. The forest surrounding the white tower was being devastated by the flying sparks. It was a scene like an earthquake and wildfire was happening at the same time! The air was clogged with smoke, making it difficult to breathe.

'But we have to go forward!'

"Lariette-nim, please increase the fire resistance!"

“Holy Breathing which stops the flames!”

-Your fire resistance has increased thanks to ‘Holy Breathing which stops the flames.’

<All allies will have their fire resistance increased by 35% and the fatigue reduced>

“Everybody stay behind me!”

Ark shouted as he jumped into the forest of flames. An extravagant hot wind hit them but it was somewhat bearable thanks to Lariette’s magic. They didn’t receive that much damage even if the flames reached them. But it wasn’t just flames threatening Ark.

Ujik, ujik, kwadududuk!

The trees rapidly collapsed because of the flames.

“Ack, Riposte! Riposte! Riposte!”

Ark blew back the trees using Riposte as he ran through the forest. After running around for a while, the Rwigenberg finally appeared in several hundred metres in front of him. He also saw the forms of Shambala and Bread at his destination.

“Nearly there. Exert yourself a bit more!”

Ark shouted when he saw the prophet clan who was carrying the Ark of Creation gasping for breath. There was a violent sound and the ground suddenly became unstable. Ark felt something strange as the ground trembled. It felt like he was riding an elevator. Ark’s face stiffened as he moved his gaze.

Ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku!

The piece of land stuck in the Rwigenberg had started to collapse. Shangri-La was deprived of its support and was starting to fall from the Rwigenberg. Ark had felt the strange sensation of falling.

‘Damn, I’m too late!’

Panic appeared on Ark’s face. He was 100 metres away from the Rwigenberg! 100 metres more and he could escape. Of course, he could escape the crisis if he rode on the transformed Pendragon. And he could somehow help a few people. However, Lariette and the prophet clan were 11 people. He wouldn’t be able to save the remaining 9~10 people. Furthermore, the prophet clan needed to activate the Ark of Creation so he would have to give up on that.

‘Although I can’t save the Ark of Creation or the prophet clan, I should at least rescue Lariette.’

“Burning Soul, transform into Pendrag.....”

Ark was about to shout for Burning Soul when he suddenly closed his mouth. Shambala, Bread and their group who had arrived on the Rwigenberg had been surrounded by demons. While a lot of demons had died in the collision between Shangri-La and Rwigenberg, there were still at least 2,000 remaining. Furthermore, Bread and Shambala’s group only had 100 people. However, Ark felt the perfect chance in that desperate situation.

“Demonic Distortion!”

Ark’s bag opened and black equipment flew into the sky. It formed a large pentagram and exploded before a message window appeared.

-You have used Demonic Distortion.

The released demonic energy from the equipment will distort the space, changing the location of allies and enemies.

Please designate an enemy target when changing locations.

“The demons 100 metres away!”

That’s right. It was Demonic Distortion! At the same time Ark, Lariette and the prophet clan were sucked into a vortex. They were sucked into

thin air and appeared on the Rwigenberg. And 12 demons were transferred to Shangri-La and fell along with it.

“Lariette-nim!”

The prophet clan surrounded Lariette and the Ark of Creation and started to chant a spell.

“Saran naburan heiradu naradu.....”

“Dirudo baguran herena boradu baram.....”

When the prophets started chanting their spells, a light immediately began to flow around the ark. The Ark of Creation was starting to activate.

“The Ark of Creation! Exterminate them before the Ark of Creation is triggered!”

A voice ordered from the rear of the demons. It was the hooded archbishop Maseutyu. Just before Shangri-La crashed into the altar, he had used Warp to escape. The 2,000 demons shrieked and flocked after hearing Maseutyu’s order.

“The White Tiger clan will form a defensive barrier around the Ark of Creation!”

After the defense formation was formed, Ark took out the Feather of Whispering. And he sent a whisper to JusticeMan.

-JusticeMan ajusshi, what is the situation now?

-We saw Shangri-La fall. Has the shield been completely destroyed?

-We penetrated but it is closing up again.

Ark replied while watching the shield gradually close up.

-The altar has been destroyed and the recovery rate has suffered enormous damage so it should be completely closed up after 10 minutes. It will be

impossible to penetrate again within the time limit. Now there's only one chance. Don't worry about supporting the airships and just send all the flying boat squadrons here as quickly as possible.

That was the reason why Ark sent the whisper to JusticeMan as soon as he landed on the Rwigenberg. It was to send the flying boat squadrons inside before the shield closed up. Of course, if the flying boat squadrons entered then the airships wouldn't be guarded anymore. But now wasn't the time to worry about the airships. The most important thing was stopping the resurrection ceremony! Even if that meant the expedition forces had to be wiped out.

-Understood.

The flying boat squadrons obeyed his order as soon as the communication ended. They turned sharply and began to rush towards Rwigenberg's shield. The demons then flocked towards the rushing flying boat. The airships fired the Spear of Thor to cover them but it couldn't stop all the demons. 100 flying boats were instantly shot down by the demons. However, the flying boat squadrons didn't fight back. They just headed towards the hole in the shield which had narrowed to a few dozen metres.

"Charge towards the Rwigenberg at top speed!"

Buaaaaa! Buaaaaa!

After a while, the flying boats led by JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members poured in through the shield. However, not all the flying boats could enter. About 1,000 flying boats entered before the shield was closed off so the others re-joined the airships.

"All formations line up! Bombard the demons on the ground!"

JusticeMan flew over the Rwigenberg and shouted. Then the 1,000 flying boats fired their guns towards the demons. It was a bombardment from the sky! The demons that had been attacking the White Tigers and the heroes' descendants started to scream. There was a huge flash of light from behind the defense formation at the same time. The image of a

mysterious goddess appeared and opened her pure white wings. At first it was a small and soft light until it spread and exploded like a big bang.

Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa, ku kwa kwa kwa kwa!

At the same time, an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-The Ark of creation has been triggered!

The holy power of the creator has been exercised. However, it is just the holy magic contained in the Ark of Creation. Therefore the Ark of Creation can't completely purify the Demonic sphere of influence. It is only possible to purify the sphere of influence within 500 metres.

* Saint Knight's special ability 'Sanctuary: Saint' has been triggered.

<The Demonic Sphere of Influence within 500 metres will be burned by the 'light' and the demons will receive 1~2,000 damage. All allies will recover 1~1,000 health, have their statuses cured and morale increased by 50%>

Thanks to the tremendous magic concentrated on this place, the Ark of Creation couldn't exert its full force and was limited to 500 metres. However, it did deal 1~2,000 damage to all demons within 500 metres. Plus all allies recovered 1~1,000 health, had their abnormal statuses released and their morale increased by 50%! When the Ark of Creation was used after the bombing, the health of the demons quickly fell. On the other hand, Ark's party recovered 1,000 health.

"Now charge!"

Ark rushed with the White Tiger clan and Shambala. JusticeMan and the 1,000 flying boats also began to attack the demons. With the bombardment and Sanctuary, the demons who received the attacks quickly collapsed. The demons were no longer opponents for the expedition. The demons rushed back and forth while being slowly destroyed. After the demons were almost wiped out, Maseutyu clicked his tongue and turned around.

“Che!”

“Do you think I will miss? I’ll get revenge for Alan! Matanyi Shooter no. 1, Devil Penetrating Arrow!”

Timosi who had discovered Maseutyu shot her arrows. Maseutyu used Warp to avoid the damage and hid his body.

“Leave the rest of the demons to the flying boat and chase after him!”

Ark shouted as he belatedly discovered Maseutyu. If he left Maseutyu alone then there was no telling what black magic he would use. After a moment, it was possible to find Maseutyu in front of a square building among the rubble of other buildings. However Maseutyu ran into the building before they could reach him. The building was the size of a soccer stadium. The dome over it had weird magic characters carved on it. He thought the red light shooting down from the sky had been concentrated on the castle. But it was actually hitting the four spires around the dome. He didn’t know what the red light concentrated on the dome was but that wasn’t important now. The power to resurrect the Dark Lord was concentrated on that dome! Then it wasn’t necessary to consider the dome’s identity.

“That is the place where the Dark Lord’s resurrection ceremony is taking place.”

Ark instantly examined the blinking warning message in the upper right corner.

-Somewhere in the darkness of the world, the Dark Lord’s resurrection ceremony has begun!

<Time remaining until the Dark Lord’s resurrection: 12 hours>

There was 12 hours remaining until the resurrection ceremony was complete.

‘Now I don’t need to worry about time anymore. When combined with the 1,000 flying boats, the 1,200 troops should be enough to stop the ceremony.’

The dome where the ceremony was taking place was the size of a soccer stadium. The size was only around 10 metres. Even if it was entirely filled with demons, there would only be hundreds of them. The 1,200 troops should be sufficient to take care of those numbers.

‘But isn’t something strange? Why aren’t there any demons around the dome where the resurrection ceremony is taking place?’

“Ark, demons are flocking from the Rwigenberg!”

JusticeMan and the flying boat squadrons flew by and shouted. He looked away from the dome and raised his head.

“The numbers?”

“I can’t grasp it accurately but they should be in the thousands.”

“.....There’s no other choice.”

Ark muttered as he eyed the dome. He already found the building where the resurrection ceremony was taking place so there was no time to deal with the demons. He couldn’t expect any more reinforcements. The best way to prevent any more troops is to march into the dome and stop the resurrection. Of course, they would still be surrounded by thousands of demons even if the ceremony was stopped. But if he stopped the resurrection ceremony then it would be the victory of the expedition army. JusticeMan ajusshi, please land the flying boat squadrons. Enter the dome before the demons arrive!”

“I understand. Everybody land!”

JusticeMan and the flying boat squadrons landed in front of the dome. Then someone ran towards Ark from one of the ships that landed. The girl running with her long hair waving behind her was Roco.

“Ark oppa!”

“Roco? Why are you here?”

“Why did I come? Of course it is to help Oppa.”

Roco quickly grabbed Ark’s arm and send a sharp look towards Lariette. Then Lariette looked at Ark before sighing and glancing away. Ark also sensed Lariette’s attitude. The strange atmosphere between the two girls had appeared again. However, Ark shook his head and got rid of those thoughts. The strange atmosphere between Roco and Lariette was because of Ark. Ark knew that he had to put his emotions in order. He needed to fully realize his feelings before clearing up the situation with both Roco and Lariette. However, now wasn’t the right time.

“Roco, don’t get distracted.”

Ark removed Roco’s arm and spoke in a serious voice. He looked at all the soldiers gathered in front of the dome and shouted.

“Now it is the final battle. All soldiers, enter the dome!”

“Waaaaaaaah!”

Ark led the White Tiger clan, 1,000 of Nagaran’s allied forces and the heroes’ descendants into the dome. Just as they passed the entrance of the dome. The magic characters carved on the wall starting shining and there was the heavy sound of something falling.

“W-what is this?”

Confusion emerged from Ark’s mouth. Once again, the dome was just the size of a soccer stadium. It was only 10 metres in height yet an unimaginable wide space appeared in front of them once they walked in the entrance. The inside of the dome was a strange chaos space. All sorts of strange objects were floating in the dark space. Complex paths also appeared all over the place. Some were twisted like pretzels and some doors floated in the sky. Other places were also upside down or had mushrooms growing from it. Then he heard a voice in the darkness.

“This space embodies the spirit of the great dark god. Traps beyond your imagination are strewn all over this maze. You guys will never be able to get out of here.”

‘Maseutyu! That guy lured us into a trap?’

Ark looked around with a dumbfounded expression. There was a ringing sound and the information window appeared in front of him.

-Idea Maze

You fell for the scheme of the archbishop of the dark church and have been trapped in the maze. The maze reflects the thoughts of the dark god who made it. The common sense of New World isn't applied in this space. Everything that exists in here moves according to the will of the dark god.

If you want to escape from the Idea Maze then you should find the hidden truth. But existences that you haven't experienced yet are present in this dark maze. Those existences created by the dark god won't approve of intruders.

<Explorer's Knowledge: New dungeon discovered bonus (Skill points: 40)>

Act 4: Idea Maze (I)

“Damn, is this the reason why there weren't any demons around the dome?”

Ark muttered as he checked the information window. That's right. This was why Maseutyu escaped into the dome after being chased by the attack squad. It was in order to trap them in this different dimension of space. And switch must've happened when the door to the dome was opened. That's why the demons didn't defend the dome. If Ark's group was busy fighting the demons then they wouldn't enter the dome so

quickly. He would've been more cautious and checked for any traps. But when Ark arrived at the dome, thousands of demons were advancing from different directions. That's why Ark urgently entered the dome and was caught by his ploy.

'That means..... He intends to tie up our ankles until the Dark Lord is resurrected.'

The Idea Maze was complex and dangerous. He had thought there was 12 hours remaining but now the situation had changed. Like the name suggested, the area was a labyrinth. It wasn't a jail with no exits. According to the laws of New World, there had to be an exit for the labyrinth but there was no guarantee that they could escape in 12 hours.

"We can't delay here. Hurry and move ahead quickly!"

-Grrrrrrrr.

Ark shouted in an urgent voice. Suddenly some black forms crawled from the space where the attack squad was. It was a monster which a large black figure and red eyes! There was an instant fishy smell as hundreds of animals appeared on all sides.

"These guys!"

Timosi grinded her teeth together after they appeared. The monsters that appeared in this space where the beasts who had previously attacked Alan. And they also annoyed the escaping Timosi and Avenger members for several days. After seeing the beasts, Timosi's arms quickly moved at a quick speed.

"Matanyi Shooter no. 3, Devil's Stabbing Arrow!"

Dozens of arrows flew across the space and exploded.

-Kuwaaaaaaaaaah!

Then the beasts simultaneously rushed towards the attack squad. Ark surveyed their movement and reflexively shouted.

“Warriors forward! Stop them with the counterattack formation!”

The warriors moved to their front with their swords and shields. In battle, warriors either used their shields to increase their defense by 50% while reducing their attack by 30% or vice versa. But warriors who reached a certain level could learn a special counterattack formation that allowed them to attack while defending. It was similar to Ark’s Riposte skill that required timing to be successful but once learnt then they could fight the enemies really quickly.

“Prepare for that attack and counterattack simultaneously!”

And the warriors and beasts collided!

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

There was a ringing sound and dozens of warriors flew back like they had been hit by a truck. The defense line instantly collapsed. The dozens of beasts came through the gaps.

“What, what the?”

Ark glanced at the scene with bewilderment. The attack squad members belonged to the Nagaran’s allied forces and were some of the best warriors in New World. They had an average level of 350~370 and they wore deluxe equipment, with one shield even costing 10 million won. There were various options and the defense of the equipment wasn’t a joke. Although their defense might be slightly lower because of the formation, why would a level 350 user with good equipment be blown away with one attack?

-Kuwwaaaah!

Then one of the beasts shrieked and ran up to him when he was distracted. Ark reflexively turned his body and used Dark Strike. The attack precisely hit a weak spot. Usually an ordinary demon would wobble and take a few steps back. However, the beast just shook its head and swung its claws. Ark was hit in the shoulder and retreated from the unexpected counterattack.

“Ugh, this bastard.....”

Ark immediately used Dark Dance to avoid the following attack and retreated. However, the beast caught up with Ark and swiped its claws again.

“Matanyi Shooter no. 1, Devil Penetrating Arrow!”

Then a bolt flew passed and hit the beast’s claw. Ark heard Timosi’s voice as he finally managed to escape from the beast.

“These guys aren’t common demons. They’re elite monsters!”

“What? You should’ve said that sooner!”

“I’m telling you now! Matanyi Shooter no. 3, Devil’s Stabbing Arrow!”

Timosi blindly fired at an animal and shouted.

‘These guys are elite demons?’

Ark eyed the beasts running wild around the area. Ark’s fighting style was to check the information and then decide on a counterattack. But they had suddenly been sucked into a strange space and then these beasts had appeared. Furthermore, he was irritated that he fell into Maseutyu’s trap and he couldn’t react as calmly as usual.

“We have to quickly move forward.”

Ark took a deep breath. The most important thing was to escape before the 12 hours was over. However, Rwigenberg’s shield was completely active again. It might not have the same power as before so the airships would be able to penetrate it with an all-out attack again but they were hindered by the demons. In the end, he could only rely on the 1,200 troops to stop the Dark Lord’s resurrection ceremony. If the attack squad hurried and were wiped out then everything would be over.

‘Let’s concentrate on the situation in front of me at the moment.’

“All warriors change to a defensive position and stop them from breaking into the camp! JusticeMan ajusshi, rehabilitation hyungnims, join up with the barrier. Explain their positions to the warriors. All priests concentrate on healing the warriors holding the barrier first!”

Ark shouted after calming his head. The warriors instantly spread out and formed a wall made of shields. The opponent was hundreds of elite monsters then the warriors in a defense position would still be blown away. That’s why Ark gathered the warriors in one place. He had connected the dozens of warriors into a circle. If the weight increased then they wouldn’t go flying easily. Ark had devised this method when dealing with the large monsters in the secret dungeon. Once the barrier was completed, it seemed like an iron wall was made using hundreds of shields.

Kwang, kwang, kwang, kwang, kwang!

When the beasts rushed to the barrier, 10 people rose with the strike. However, the warriors had their arms linked so they didn’t fly away.

“Okay, we’ve prevented the beasts from breaking into the camp.”

But he couldn’t be relieved just yet. The shields became dented every time the beasts rushed. The endurance of the shield was being steadily decreased. If this continued then the shield of the lead warriors would be destroyed in no time. Furthermore, the warriors were in a defense position so it wasn’t possible for them to counterattack. Ark had no intention of just watching that happen.

“Jjak-tung hyung, please grasp the information of these beasts!”

“U-understood. ‘Knowing onself and one’s opponent’!”

It was the special skill of the Guardian=Strategist that Jjak-tung changed to! The information about the black beasts appeared when Jjak-tung used the skill.

-Name: Evil Thoughts

Level: 500 (Elite)

Health: 8,000

Description: Dark beasts born from evil thoughts (Demonic).

Characteristics: Resistance to weapons +50%, Resistance to magic -30%, Resistance to the light attribute -50%.

Specialty: <Rush> Breakthrough power will increase by 30%.

<Quick> Movement speed will increase by 30%.

<Confusion> When the Evil Thoughts are in a critical condition, all attacks will have a 'Confusion' effect. When 'Confusion' is used, the health of the Evil Thoughts is decreased but the opponent hit by it will attack their colleague for a certain period of time. The duration will depend on their mental power.

"Now I have some idea about them."

Ark nodded after hearing the information from Jjak-tung. The reason why the beast wasn't really affected by Ark's Dark Strike was because of their resistance to weapons. And they caught up with Dark Dance because of the <Quick> effect, while the warriors were blown away because of the 'Rush' effect.

'50% resistance to weapons, Rush, Quick and Confusion..... There are no abilities that are particularly threatening. The most difficult thing is the 'Quick' effect.

It was unnecessary to say how important speed was in close combat fighting. The warriors weren't able to counterattack because they were overwhelmed by the speed.

'First I have to seal their movements!'

Ark determined and instantly thought of a strategy.

“Magicians add magic to the archers’ arrows!”

The magicians chanted their spells and imbued the arrows with magic after hearing Ark’s command. Fire and ice covered the arrows and became magic arrows.

“Concentrate on attacking their legs!”

“Precision Shot!”

Syu syu syu syu, syu syu syu syuk!

Hundreds of magic flew through the air. They flew in a parabola over the warriors and struck the beasts’ leg. When hit by the arrows in a vital spot like that, the beasts were more likely to get abnormal statuses such as ‘blind’ or ‘blood vessel destruction.’ The abnormal status activated by the damage was the largest advantage of archers. Of course, hitting a vital spot on a battlefield wasn’t an easy task. The ability to hit the vital spots made archers one of the most desired professions in New World but it required a considerable level of archery skill. In fact, there were users over level 100 who never hit the vital spots. However, the attack squad members were some of the best in New World and had a hit rate of above 70%. Furthermore, their arrows were coated in magic so the resistance to weapons didn’t apply.

-Kuwaaaaah!

The beasts stumbled as dozens of arrows were driven into their knees or calves. And more than half of them were ‘slowed.’

“All magicians use wide area magic on the other side of the barrier!”

“Fire of anger from the bottom of hell, Hell Breath!”

“Earth Elemental, Air Elemental, Fire Elemental, Water Elemental. I call you under the command of the great god, be enthusiastic and run wild. Summon spirits!”

Kuwaaaaaaaaah!

At that time, the area where the Evil Thoughts were gathered warped. The attack squad members used Willpower Exchange and 3~4 wide area magic was stacked up. Flames rose dozens of metres high from the ground while different elemental spirits appeared and attacked. Thanks to the archers' Precise Shot, the demons were incapable of running away. Hundreds of Evil Thoughts lost their fighting spirit thanks to the magic and arrows!

".....Descend to this earth, Great Mother of Creation!"

Then Lariette's voice came from the rear. The Ark of Creation opened and a goddess appeared in the darkness.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Sanctuary spread light through the darkness and burned the demons. Meanwhile the soldiers wrapped in the explosion recovered their health.

"Now. Magicians, add magic to the warriors' shields and swords!"

"Atmosphere of mana, become the sword and shield!"

The magicians chanted a spell and a flash appeared around the swords and shields. Ark's eyes gleamed and he shouted.

"Now, switch to assault mode!"

"Uhwaaaaaah!"

Hundreds of warriors rushed with their magic swords. The soldiers turned into one solid mass and it seemed like they were a giant tank. The huge tank hit the demons already damaged by the magic arrows and Sanctuary. Black blood welled up like a water fountain. Thanks to the magic arrows, the Evil Thoughts already had their speed reduced. The archers continued to use Precise Shot to hit their eyes, arms and other vital spots to reduce the speed. Therefore the warriors were able to slaughter the Evil Thoughts.

'Okay, now there is a chance to win. We just have to finish it!'

“Everybody enter the battle. Troops divide into units of 10 and attack the Evil Thoughts!”

The soldiers divided into groups of 10 and dispersed. This was a tactic that Ark frequently used in battle. Warrior, magician, priest, White Tiger clan..... Every group had a combination of those professions. In a large battle, the priests normally focused on the warriors while the archers attacked the monsters. The combination could make up for the weaknesses of each profession. Meanwhile Ark’s party was composed of Roco and the heroes’ descendants!

“Take this, Dark Strike!”

Ark moved like a ghost and attacked. Then a huge figure raised his greatsword and shouted.

“Beast Spirit Possession! Rise power of the bear! Rise power of the dog!”

The man who absorbed the shape of a bear and a dog was the Beast Master Bread! Bread slammed his shoulder and caused the Evil Thoughts to retreat. Then a blurry shape appeared behind the Evil Thoughts. While the Evil Thoughts were concentrated on Ark and Bread, Shambala had appeared behind them.

“.....Eunsal!”

Shambala muttered and the side of the Evil Thought split open, causing a shower of black blood. The Evil Thoughts that became tattered from Ark, Bread and Shambala’s linked attack shrieked and frantically waved its claw.

“I’ll get revenge for Alan! Matanyi Shooter no. 1, Devil Penetrating Arrow!”

An arrow flew from Timosi and hit the shoulders of the Evil Thoughts. At the same time, the arms of the Evil Thoughts became limp. A number of Evil Thoughts burst into tears and angrily rushed towards Ark. Then Lariette’s voice came from the rear.

“Pure Shield!”

At that moment, a shield of light formed in front of Ark. Roco couldn't ignore that Lariette helped Ark and raised her harp.

“Melody Rhapsody Impromptu. Sonata of Pain!”

Some powerful sound waves headed towards the beasts. Roco had intended to use the sound waves from her harp to attack the Evil Thoughts. However, the sound waves collided with Lariette's shield of light and an unimaginable result was produced.

Kuoooooh!

The shield of light vibrated and amplified the sound waves. The amplified shock wave reflected off the shield and light and shot forward. Then cracks appeared on the ground and a few Evil Thoughts flew 20 metres away. Lariette and Roco gaped with shock as an information window appeared in front of them.

-A new cooperative chain skill has been registered.

Combined chain skill: When colleagues with special attributes or professions use specific skills together then they are incorporated into each other and will exert an ever more powerful effect. This is a cooperative chain skill. However, the colleagues that trigger the cooperative chain skill have to possess the same purpose.

Then there was a strange metal whine as Wormer raised a fist and shouted.

“This is a man's romance! Armoured suit attachment complete!”

-Kuwwaaaah!

Several beasts had run up to Wormer. He had expected Wormer to freak out and escape but he just smiled instead.

“Heh, you will be the first to die. Armoured suit engine open! Aim at the Evil Thoughts, launch!”

Tu tu tu tu, tu tu tu tu!

At that moment, the metal pieces fitted on Wormer’s chest opened. The gun carriage fired towards the Evil Thoughts. That’s right. It was a personal battle armour that Wormer and the engineers from the Magic Institute created.

“Hahaha, how do you like the taste of my genius armoured suit?”

The shells fired from the magic gun exploded. After a brief moment, the Evil Thoughts ran out from the detonation area. The power of the magic gun wasn’t enough to stop the elite demons.

“Wormer!”

Ark shouted as the Evil Thoughts ran forward. However there was still a smile on Wormer’s face.

“Huhuhu, do you think I didn’t expect this much? Magic engine open!”

There was a roaring sound from Wormer’s foot and he moved backwards. There was a small engine attached to the bottom of the foot that allowed him to move quickly.

“Hahaha, I’ll turn you into rags!”

Wormer slid freely around the ground and fired his guns. Wormer became a considerably strong warrior thanks to his armoured suit.

“Ark, the Evil Thoughts are surging!”

Ark had been stupidly watching Wormer when he heard Shambala’s voice in his ear. Ark gathered his spirit and shouted.

“Let’s go! Dark Strike!”

“Earth storm!”

“Torrential Sword!”

Ark, Bread and Shambala struck at the Evil Thoughts. The power of Ark and the heroes’ descendants was overwhelming.

‘Their skills are superior. Mine has also become much stronger after the heroes’ descendants are gathered!’

Ark realized it after battling with the party. In fact, Ark had also realized this in the past after fighting with Shambala. At that time, the Dark Walker and Saint Assassin had different skills and effects. But when they fought together, the two skills had a strange connection which made fighting together easy. He later learned that it was because Ark and Shambala were descendants of heroes that fought together. The Hero Christin and the Assassin Master Salrin had fought against the darkness together and developed skills in conjunction with each other. The rest of the heroes’ descendants were also like that. When they fought together, a connection was clearly shown. Despite Roco not being a hero’s descendant, she managed to trigger a cooperative skill with Lariette. Furthermore, Ark’s Eternal Soul automatically raised his attack by 40% when fighting against demons. Therefore Ark and his party left devastation in their wake on the battlefield. After 30 minutes, the number of Evil Thoughts had been reduced to dozens.

“We’re in the final stretches! Annihilate them!”

“Waaaaahhhhh!”

The attack squad cried out after hearing Ark’s words and raised their weapons.

“We’ve exterminated the Evil Thoughts on the left side!”

“We’ve exterminated the Evil Thoughts on the right side!”

The attack squad covered in the blood and flesh of Evil Thoughts reported back.

“Good work. Recover your health and mana and check your equipment.”

Ark nodded and gave an order. After entering the labyrinth, they had already experienced 10 big battles. There was no time left. He couldn't get any more reinforcements. If this was a regular battle then he would use scouts to avoid as much battles as possible. But the Evil Thoughts just suddenly appeared in this space. They showed up and surrounded the group on all side so there was no way to escape.

‘Yet I’ve already grasped the movements of the Evil Thoughts.’

In fact, in online games the monsters were toughest when fighting against them the first time. They didn't understand the special characteristics of the opponent and the movement patterns so it wasn't easy to respond. The Evil Thoughts were difficult to fight against when they first appeared. But after fighting against the Evil Thoughts 10 times, they had become completely accustomed to the attack pattern. Knowing the attack patterns meant he could predict their movements. The attack squad could now respond to any surprise attacks without panic. When they faced the Evil Thoughts the first time, it took 30 minutes to wipe them all out with 100 casualties. Now it only took 20 minutes and they received no damage.

‘I’ve levelled a lot thanks to that but.....’

Ark sighed and looked at his character information window.

Character Name	Ark	Race	Human
Alignment	Good +500	Nobility Title	Viscount
Fame	42,535 (+500)	Level	496
Profession	Dark Soul		

Title		Cat Knight, Caretaker of the People, Jackson’s Hero, Great Adventurer, Magic Institute Member, Seutandal’s Hero	
Health	8,990 (+475)	Mana	9,190 (+225)
Spiritual Power	956	Strength	989 (+38)
Agility	1,304 (+120)	Stamina	1,564 (+65)
Wisdom	199 (+10)	Intelligence	1,672 (+25)
Luck	234 (+60)	Flexibility	329
Art of Communication	89	Affection	229 (+10)
Resilience	483	Dark Fog	91
Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics		258	
* Equipment item effects			
Guardian Armour of the Merpeople (Armour): Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified. Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10% Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10 Wolf’s Feet (Shoes): Agility + 40, Movement Speed +40%, Attack Speed +10%, ‘Jump’ is available *<Animal King> Set effect: Strength + 35, Agility + 35, Stamina +35, Defense +70, Wild Strength is available			

Shining Darkness (Two-handed Sword): +10% additional damage against demonic monsters, Agility +20, Stamina +20, Intelligence +20

Warrior's Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 3

White Tiger's Cloak (Mantle): immune to skills that lower morale, Courage +30%, Agility +30, White Tiger's Roar is available

Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available

Rarukan's Ring (Ring): Agility + 10, Attack Speed +10%, Critical Hit +8%, 'Dark Protection' available

Ark's Ring (Ring): Strength + 5, Agility + 5, Stamina + 5, Wisdom + 5, Intelligence + 5, 'Sudden Increase in Power' available

Amulet of Vitality (Bracelet): Health + 50, Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds

Gladiator's Honour (Bracelet): Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5%

* All abilities will increase by 50% in the dark

* You have the ability to hide in the darkness (30 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat)

* Resistance to Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.

* You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.

* Shock absorption is increased by 20%.

* Poison resistance has increased by 50%.

* 10% increased attack and defense.

He had been level 492 when he entered the Idea Maze. He had gained 4 levels in here. It was a natural result so they killed thousands of elite monsters without any breaks. However Ark had a gloomy expression on his face.

‘There are still 1,000 soldiers left and it isn’t difficult dealing with the Evil Thoughts. But.....’

Ark’s purpose wasn’t to raise his level. It was to escape from the Idea Maze as soon as possible in order to stop the resurrection ceremony.

-Somewhere in the darkness of the world, the Dark Lord’s resurrection ceremony has begun!

<Time remaining: 7 hours>

Ark confirmed the blinking warning message and sighed. They had already wasted 5 hours in the maze.

‘Damn, how the hell do I get out of this maze?’

Ark looked at the strange maze with pained eyes. This was actually the largest problem. The labyrinth was like a 3D puzzle and moving the wrong way meant that he could appear back at the beginning.

Furthermore, there were hundreds of weird shapes in the background that spun around like a kaleidoscope that made it difficult to grasp the terrain of the dungeon. Therefore the attack squad had wandered for 5 hours and had returned to almost the beginning.

‘I can’t find the path even if I use the cartography skill.’

Even the cartography skill didn’t work in the Idea Maze. Of course, if he dispersed the troops to look for the exit then it was possible to save time. But he didn’t know when there would be a surprise attack and how many monsters there would be. If he spread his troops then it was possible that they would be wiped out. However, he couldn’t roam this 3D maze blindly.

‘This is a complete dilemma.’

Ark sighed and looked down at Burning Soul coiled around his waist. If he made Burning Soul transform then Ark might be able to find a path in the air. The Idea Maze wasn't just a blank space. Various pillars and crystals in the air but it wasn't to the extent that they couldn't move through it. If he took Burning Soul around the labyrinth then wasn't it possible to find the exit?

'Yes, Burning Soul might be able to find the exit but that doesn't mean we can make our way there.'

Yes, that was the reason why Ark hadn't used that method. Once again this was a 3D maze with thousands of paths. Even if he found the exit, it might be impossible for Ark to find a path there. Furthermore, the labyrinth also had worm holes that would warp them to another area. There was no way to follow a straight path. The reason the attack squad had wandered around the same areas many time was because of the worm holes. Wormholes also existed in the sky so there was no guarantee that the members could move to the exit.

'Damn, Maseutyu must be hiding somewhere and laughing.'

Anger welled up inside him at the thought.

'I'll smash him as soon as I find him after chasing.....'

Ark was sighing when a thought appeared in his mind.

'Wait? Chasing? Then.....?'

"That's right, there is that method!"

Ark thought for a while before standing up and shouting. The attack squad members just stared at Ark after he stood up and yelled. It was a look which showed their confusion. However, his gaze publicized that everything was fine. Ark smiled and looked at them before speaking.

"Everybody get up. Be prepared to get out of here."

“Only a bit more to go.”

Maseutyu murmured with excitement as he looked at a blood red iron door.

“In the next 4 hours..... After 4 hours the King of Darkness will descend down to this land! Then no one will be able to stop him. The Dark Lord who has been hiding and waiting for hundreds of years will return! Hahahaha.....”

“We won’t let you!”

It was at that moment. Suddenly a ray flew through the darkness. Maseutyu hadn’t considered an attack and the ray hit his thigh. Maseutyu knelt down and looked at the direction where the ray came from.

“T-these guys?”

Maseutyu stared with confusion. Hundreds of soldiers were approaching from the other side of the square. At the forefront of the soldiers were Ark, Shambala, Bread, Redian, Lariette, Timosi and Wormer, the descendants of the 7 heroes. That’s right. They were the elite members of the expedition force! Maseutyu stared at them with disbelief and stuttered.

“T-this is ridiculous! This is the Idea Maze where no souls can escape from. But these humans in only 8 hours.....”

“Are you wondering why? It is because you told us the way.”

“Me? That’s impossible.....”

“Well, you left us clues that allowed this wonderful guy to track.

Ark smiled and patted Burning Soul coiled around his waist. Then Burning Soul rubbed against his hand with a happy expression. That’s

right. Ark managed to find the exit to this annoying maze thanks to Burning Soul. Around 3 hours ago, Ark had been sitting around when he suddenly stood up and said that they would escape from the maze in a confident voice.

“What does that mean?”

“Didn’t you say there wasn’t a way to escape?”

“Aren’t we like this because we couldn’t find the exit?”

“.....Are you feverish?”

Shambala, Bread, Redian and Lariette looked at him with perplexed eyes. Roco then interrupted with an angry voice.

“Ark oppa isn’t someone who will speak nonsense! If he says we’ll leave then we are leaving!”

As expected, Roco was the person who knew Ark best. That’s right. Ark was such a person. He was a man of action. Bread scratched his head after hearing Roco’s serious voice and asked.

“.....Do you really have a method?”

“Huhuhuhu.”

Ark just laughed instead of answering. Ark shouted towards Burning Soul wound around his waist.

“Burning Soul!”

Kurarara, kurarara?

Burning Soul looked up at him with wide eyes. Ark smiled and spoke to Burning Soul.

“Burning Soul, using Stalking to find all the footprints in this area!”

Kurarara, kurarara!

Burning Soul nodded and dropped down to the ground. His head moved along the ground as he flicked his tongue. After a while, a huge number of footprints appeared in front of Ark.

“Apply filter, delete the footprints of the demons!”

When Ark gave the command, all the footprints of the beasts disappeared.

“Apply filter, delete the footprint of the foreigners!”

This time the footprints of the attack squad disappeared. After all the footprints disappeared, only one set remained.

-Search for information of the target footprint.

<Classification: Black magician, Alignment: Chaotic NPC, Travelling time: 5 hours and 16 minutes ago>

‘I found you Maseutyu!’

A satisfied smile appeared on Ark’s face after seeing the footprints. This was the method Ark devised to escape from the maze. It was thanks to Maseutyu that the attack squad members discovered the exit. He had run away and they had followed him. The place where he had escaped to was probably the exit.

‘In other words, that fellow is either waiting by the exit or had already escaped so we can follow his footprints out the exit!’

That’s how Ark thought about using Burning Soul’s Stalking. Burning Soul’s Stalking had already reached Master level so he gained the ability to filter out footprints. The search time had also extended by 50% and he could now follow the footsteps for 6 hours.

‘Maseutyu passed by 5 hours ago so I can still track him. If I remove the demons and the attack squad, the footprints belonging to the black magician chaotic NPC is obviously Maseutyu!’

It was a sure way to find the exit. There was no more time to hesitate.

“Everybody rise! From now on we will be marching towards the exit! Burning Soul, lead the way!”

Ark and the attack squad followed Maseutyu’s footsteps. So Maseutyu taught Ark the path.

‘If I didn’t use this method then we would’ve been wandering for a few days.’

Ark once again realized how complicated the Idea Maze was after following Maseutyu’s footprints. Maseutyu had used the shortest course to navigate the labyrinth. Yet it still took the attack squad 3 hours to reach this place. That’s because the path was still complicated. They had also been attacked by Evil Thoughts along the way so the attack squad had decreased by 800 people.

‘800 people were able to escape from the maze because of Burning Soul!’

Then Maseutyu glared and shouted.

“How dare you guys.....”

“It is thanks to you that we got here. Why are you talking such nonsense?”

“.....That’s far enough.”

Maseutyu’s face turned red after hearing Ark’s words. He frowned and stood up before yelling.

“Cheeky bastard, I’ll show you what true fear is!”

It was at that moment. Maseutyu’s body was surrounded by a red flash and his skin split open. Blackened mucus flowed out from the cracked skin. After a while, a spider like monster with two heads appeared. A red warning message appeared in front of Ark.

-The boss of Darkness 'Jin. Maseutyu' has appeared!

Act 5: Idea Maze (Ⅱ)

What the? That guy, he wasn't just an ordinary NPC?

Ark became upset after seeing the spider like form that Maseutyu had transformed himself into. However, a smile spread on Ark's face after examining his information with Eyes of the Cat. Surprisingly Maseutyu was level 800. However he wasn't an elite boss. No matter how high levelled the boss was, he wasn't a match for 800 elite soldiers. Ark laughed and lifted his fist.

"Let's start. It is 800 vs. 1."

He opened his fist and headed towards Maseutyu.

Syu syu syu syu, syu syu syu syu!

A continuous stream of light appeared from behind Ark. They were hundreds of magic arrows. Fire, ice, lightning, poison, etc. All types of magic arrows flew in an arc towards Maseutyu. No, as soon as it was about to hit!

"Teleport!"

Maseutyu invoked a high speed incantation and chanted his spell with extravagant speed before disappearing.

".....Is he trying to buy time?"

Ark muttered with a frown. Magicians who used that magic couldn't be easily caught. Furthermore, 'Teleport' was different from 'Warp' where the location could be designated. However, Ark had a magician slayer that could destroy Teleport!

“Do you think you can escape? Burning Soul, use Stalking to keep track of Maseutyu’s location!”

Kurarara, kurarara!

-Burning Soul has used Stalking.

<He has discovered the mana trace of Teleport. Current mana flow: 100 metres to the 6 o’clock direction>

“The rear! All archers concentrate on shooting 100 metres away in the 6 o’clock direction.....”

Ark shouted before flinching and closing his mouth. Maseutyu had teleported to the place where the attack squad was crowded. If arrows were shot blindly then the attack squad members would become like hedgehogs.

“But having some smarts doesn’t change the fact that this is your grave. All nearby soldiers surround him and use Shield Stroke to cancel the spell!”

The soldiers flocked like vultures towards Maseutyu after hearing Ark’s command. Maseutyu just laughed and shouted.

“.....Run out of control, demons! Shout, devil subordinates! Devil Explosion!”

A black sphere floated about Maseutyu’s head. Dozens of chains shot from the black sphere and tied up the members of the attack squad. The sphere exploded at the same time and the explosion ran down the chain, dealing rapid damage to the soldiers. All attack squad members within 20 metres of Maseutyu received a critical hit and became paralyzed. As the other squad members ran up, Maseutyu just giggled and said.

“Kukukuku, Teleport!”

“Oh my god, what is this?”

Ark's mouth dropped open as he saw Maseutyu's battle style. While Teleport was a nuisance spell, it couldn't actually be used for combat. The reason was that Teleport required 1 minute to chant the spell. Even if he used high speed incantation, it still required 30~40 to finish the chant. Furthermore, Teleport wasn't an attack magic. Even if he chanted the spell within 30~40 seconds, it would only teleport him a few hundred metres away. So Teleport was only a magic that could be prepared before the battle began. Yet Maseutyu had solved these issues because of his two heads. One head used Teleport while the other one used Devil Explosion. While Devil Explosion blocked the attack squad members, the other head finished chanting the Teleport spell. That gap was only 10 seconds. Devil Explosion took care of all the obstacles while the other soldiers wouldn't be able to reach in time. Thanks to the two heads chanting Teleport and Devil Explosion, it was like twice the amount of magic.

"Damn, I can't attack even if Burning Soul knows the location of the teleportation!"

Devil Explosion had an attack range of approximately 20 metres. The only way to stop Devil Explosion was using magic and arrows. However, Maseutyu always teleported among warriors so he couldn't shoot the arrows and magic. Devil Explosion blocked close ranged attacks while Teleport blocked long ranged attacks.

"Hahaha, you stupid fellows! Devil Explosion!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Maseutyu appeared among the soldiers like a fish in water and used Devil Explosion. Devil Explosion wasn't powerful enough to kill the soldiers in one blow. However, the warriors surrounding Maseutyu were paralyzed so they couldn't use Shield Stroke. As soon as Maseutyu used Teleport to escape, the attack squad members would instantly receive recovery magic. That's why nobody had been killed despite receiving several attacks.....

'That guy's purpose isn't to kill the soldiers. He wants to waste time.'

That's right. There was no reason for Maseutyu to risk danger by fighting the attack squad. There was only 2 hours and 40 minutes left until the Dark Lord's resurrection. As long as he tied them up for 2 hours and 40 minutes then the world would be engulfed in darkness. If this situation kept on continuing then it was highly likely that would happen.

'But there is no way to stop him if he keeps teleporting between the members.'

Ark bit his lip and stared at Maseutyu. It was a simple but effective tactic.

'Wait? He is appearing where the soldiers are gathered. Then.....'

An idea popped into Ark's head. He turned around and shouted towards Roco who was singing the Song of Recovery.

"Roco, use that!"

"What?"

"The skill you used to trick Jewel in Lancel village!"

"Ah!"

Roco's eyes sparkled at Ark's words. Then she began to strum away at her harp with tremendous speed. Suddenly the 800 people multiplied and the area was filled with thousands of people. That's right. It was the Illusion Sonata that made Jewel and the bandit group wander around trying to find Lancel. It was the secret technique that she learned from the ghost Melody.

"Hahaha, Devil Explosion!"

At that moment, Maseutyu appeared in an area crowded with soldiers and used Devil Explosion. The black sphere floated over his head and chains appeared all over the place. However, the chains just went through their body into the ground. They were the illusionary soldiers.

“What, what the?”

“Huhuhu, why are you so surprised? It is tightly stuck.”

Ark smiled as he raised a finger. The archers simultaneously fired their arrows.

“Huck! T-tele..... Waaahhhh!”

Maseutyu rushed to use Teleport but the arrows were faster. Maseutyu looked like a hedgehog as he was pierced by more than 100 arrows. And.....

“There’s another round. You stupid spider. Launch!”

Syu syu syu syu, syu syu syu syu!

Maseutyu had appeared in a place where the soldiers were created using Illusion Sonata. Burning Soul had predicted the location using Stalking so the archers had been prepared in advance to shoot hundreds of arrows. Maseutyu received the shower of arrows and 70% of his health quickly flew away. It was a natural result since Maseutyu wasn’t an elite boss and he was also a magic that was weak to weapons.

“Kuuuuoh, these guys.....! They dare to use such tricks.....”

Maseutyu gnashed his teeth as he was hit by another shower of arrows. But Ark just smiled and retorted.

“A spider like you dared to call such tactics cheating?”

“You..... Don’t think it will end like this. Kuwaaaaaaaah! Come out!”

Maseutyu’s body shook as he shouted. Maseutyu who had transformed into a spider suddenly shot thousands of fist sized spiders into the sky. They showed sharp teeth and headed towards the attack squad members. Maseutyu’s intention was clear. The spiders would pass through the illusionary members and attack the actual soldiers. He would then teleport to the place where there were a lot of spiders.

"What? Damn, he still had a surprise like this."

Ark murmured as he stared at Maseutyu. Then Shambala and Bread shouted in desperate voices.

"Now's not the time to stare stupidly!"

"Yes, the illusions will be destroyed by the spiders."

But Ark just laughed and took a deep breath. And he roared into the sky.

"It's been a while. Spirit of the Cat!"

Nyaaaaa!

At that moment, the form of a black cat appeared above Ark's head. Its eyes shone gold and it let out a large cry, making the spiders stiffen and fall to the ground. Spirit of the Cat was a skill Ark learnt in the beginning that made all small monsters in the vicinity paralyzed.

"I-it's a scam!"

"You're saying this? Salvo!"

Syu syu syu syu, syu syu syu syu!

A huge amount of arrows headed towards Maseutyu.

"Ugh, Teleport!"

Maseutyu fired the prepared Teleport. He appeared among the attack squad members again but Maseutyu didn't use Devil Explosion. Thick cobwebs shot out from his hip and shot towards the maze. He realized that he was at a disadvantage and was trying to run away into the maze.

"Not a chance! Matanyi Shooter no. 1, Devil Penetrating Arrow!"

Timosi kicked the ground, jumped up and fired some arrows. The arrows flew like a flash of light and cut through Maseutyu's cobwebs. The body that was surrounded by the cobweb fell to the ground.

“Now. Archers and magicians, attack!”

Hundreds of arrows and magic exploded from the attack squad members.

“Kuooh..... H-how annoying. But..... You guys will never get away from here. This is where you guys..... You grave. Kukukuku. Hahaha, kuaaack!”

As expected, the boss muttered some unlucky final words before screaming and collapsing from the wave of arrows and magic.

-Your level has risen.

“Boring bastard!”

Ark muttered as the message surfaced in front of him. This was the archbishop of the dark church yet Ark only gained 1 level from defeating him? Furthermore, his experience had already been at 80% so Ark actually only got 20% experience. Even the attack squad members didn’t level up that much. Despite not being an elite boss, he should’ve gained more than 1 level.

“Damn, even the loot he dropped isn’t that great.”

Ark’s face became even more offended as he examined the items.

-Holy Bible of the Dark Church

<The secrets regarding the relationship between the Dark Lord and the dark church is written in this book>

-Church of Darkness’ Staff (Rare)

Weapon type: Staff

Attack: 30~38 Durability: 55/90

Weight: 50 User Restriction: Level 350 or more chaotic black magician.

The staff used by Maseutyu, the archbishop of the dark church. The original staff of the dark church had a tremendous amount of dark power concentrated on it. The dark power allowed an archbishop of the dark church to summon strong demons. But it became lost when the dark church was destroyed by the soldiers on the continent. This staff is just an imitation of the lost staff.

<Option: Mental Power +10, Intelligence +40, Mana +200, Black Magician skills +10%>

<Special Option: The black magician exclusive skill 'Stamp of Death' is applied. Stamp of Death has a 1% chance of causing instant death which using cursed magic.

The Holy Bible of the Dark Church was just an ordinary book that could be seen anywhere. And the Church of Darkness' Staff was just a rare staff that only level 250~300 magicians users would use. However, the item restriction on this staff was limited to level 350 chaotic black magicians.

'Well, the loot isn't that important.....'

Ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku!

All of a sudden the floor started vibrating and a warning message appeared.

-The magic maintaining the 3D maze has disappeared and the Idea Maze is melting.

<Time remaining until the collapse of the Idea Maze: 59 minutes>

"It is collapsing?"

"Ark, over there!"

He heard JusticeMan's voice on the outskirts of the square. He turned his head and saw the outskirts of the 3D maze were slowly collapsing. However Ark didn't panic. There was no need to panic. The attack

squad had already arrived at the exit. This must be the meaning of Maseutyu's final words. There was 59 minutes until it collapsed. It was plenty of time to open the exit and leave. There was no need to worry about escaping from Idea Maze.

'The final battle will start the moment that door opens.'

That's right. The Dark Lord hadn't been resurrected yet but the Red Man and demons would be gathered on the other side. On the other hand, there were 800 attack squad members still remaining. When considering the enemy, 800 wasn't a lot of people. But he couldn't expect any reinforcements because of the shield so he had to make do with these troops.

'Then we should at least be in our best condition!'

"The exit is already secured so there is no need to hurry. If we leave the Idea Maze then it is likely that the battle will start straight away. This might be the last opportunity for a rest so we should recover our health and mana to 100%."

The soldiers nodded and sat down to recover. In order to prepare for the final battle, the magicians and priests used various buffs while others rearranged their bags.

"I guess I should prepare to."

Ark muttered as he watched the other members. Ark didn't know how many enemies would be waiting after they exited the maze. But there was one thing he could be sure of.

'The Red Man!'

That's right. The source behind this event was the Red Man! He already knew how strong the Red Man was after fighting him in Seutandal. Of course, he had only been level 300 at the time. After fighting in the Demonic War, he had reached level 497 and even changed to a 2nd profession. His battle sense had also improved. Even so, Ark wasn't sure

that he would be able to overpower the Red Man. At that time the Red Man had showed overwhelming power.

‘But I had no information at that time and also wasn’t prepared for the combat. It won’t be so easy this time.’

In fact, Ark had been worried about it from the moment he left for Kwarian. And he came up with a countermeasure.

‘I didn’t want to use this method again if possible.... But it is the best method.’

Ark sighed before looking at Curio.

“Curio, come with me.”

“What? Why?”

“Stop talking nonsense and just follow!”

Curio immediately shrunk back with a scared expression. However, Ark just grabbed Curio’s wing and pulled him to a corner.

“Eh? Eh? Eh? Why?”

Curio looked like a freshman being dragged to the restroom by a senior but.....

“Kikikiki, Master should’ve said it sooner. I would welcome it at any time.”

“Damn, have some moderation. Huck huck huck.....”

The frightened Curio soon became overweight after a few minutes. Ark was actually the one returning with a pale face.

“Ark-nim!”

“Ark oppa!”

Lariette and Roco both looked aghast as they saw the returning Ark. They both flinched and looked at each other before averting their gaze. Ark refused to notice the atmosphere and quickly spoke.

"It's not a big deal. Are all your preparations finished?"

"We're in the best condition!"

"Okay, then let's go. Brace yourselves."

"Yes. Let's depart!"

"Ohhhhhh!"

The attack squad members shouted excitedly. That sword that was repaired shone with a bright light while the armour and shield regained their forms. The shining equipment made them look like nobles! A light of hope appeared in the eyes of the 800 soldiers. Now was the final step to stop the Dark Lord's resurrection and rescue New World.....

"Eh?"

Confusion emerged from Ark's mouth as he approached the red iron door. Red sparks appeared all over the door the moment a hand reached out to touch it. He was hit by some pain and a warning message appeared in front of him.

-You have received damage from an unknown spirit.

500 damage!

The attack squad members muttered noisily in front of the closed door.

"What the? What's going on?"

"Is there a problem?"

"Hey, this isn't a joke. There's only 30 minutes left until this space completely disappears. Now there is a problem?"

JusticeMan and the heroes' descendants were also disturbed.

"Ark, what is going on?"

"This..... It won't open."

"It won't open? What does that mean? We killed Maseutyu."

"There must be some other problem.... My hand can't even touch it."

Ark muttered with an uneasy voice. That's right. The person who trapped them in this maze was Maseutyu! Ark was convinced that the Idea Maze was resolved because they killed Maseutyu. And he thought it was possible to exit the exit at any time. Therefore it was possible to have some leeway to rest and recover.

But when he tried to leave, his hands couldn't even touch the door.

"Is a key or something necessary?"

"No.....there is nowhere to insert a key."

Ark replied while Maseutyu's last words popped into his head.

'You'll never be able to escape the Idea Maze even if I die!'

He thought it was just the nonsense of a person dying. However, he couldn't think of it as nonsense anymore now that he couldn't open the door.

'Does that mean I'll never be able to open it?'

His heart dropped at the thought. Ark shook his head and denied the idea.

'That is ridiculous. This is definitely the only exit in the Idea Maze. There is no other reason for Maseutyu to be watching it. And there has to be a way to open the exit. If there is a way to enter then there is also a way to exit. That is the rule of New World. Even the Red Man can't ignore New World's rules!'

He had already confirmed that with Rwigenberg's shield. Ark thought the shield was able to withstand the concentrated force of the expedition because the Red Man was a hacking program that ignored the rules of New World. But the shield was just due to the recovery rate and the ancient sacrifice magic. The Red Man was more powerful than others because he knew all the secrets of New World and took advantage of it.

'Yes, this is the same as the shield. Just like an unbeatable shield doesn't exist in New World, there is no door that absolutely won't open. A way to open the door has to exist. This is why Maseutyu risked his life to buy some time. The problem is finding it.....'

"Get out of the way!"

Ark was using his brain at full capacity when there was a sudden yell. Bread had rushed towards the door from behind him and swung his greatsword.

"I will crack it open! Gate Destruction!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The greatsword hit the iron door. Players who used a greatsword can perform Gate Destruction. When attacking gates, this skill gave an additional 200~500% damage. But an unimaginable reaction occurred. The greatsword was engulfed in a red aura and bounced back like a rubber ball. At the same time, the red aura covering the door formed sharp points and shot towards the attack squad.

Syu syu syu syuk, syu syu syu syuk!

"W-what is this?"

"It is a trap! Defense formation!"

The soldiers gathered near the door screamed and raised their shields. However, the red sharp points penetrated their bodies before they could completely switch to a defense stance. The warriors lost 20~30% health

despite wearing heavy armour. Fortunately they had recovered their health to 100% so none of the warriors died from the attack.

“T-t-this is not.....”

“You idiot, think a little before you move! Are you just a dog? Do you only understand after being bitten?”

Redian rolled along the ground and snapped angrily at Bread after getting up. Bread scratched his head and said.

“Then what should we do? There’s no time and the door won’t open.....”

“But you shouldn’t just blindly bash at it.”

“Wait!”

The Ark raised his hand and interrupted Redian scolding Bread.

“Maybe Bread had the right idea.”

“What do you mean?”

“.....Look at this.”

Ark pointed to the bottom of the iron door. In fact, Ark had carefully looked over the door. But he couldn’t find anything. After the red aura reacted to Bread’s attack, several parts of the redness became thinner and he could see the iron door. Ark was pointing towards some strange characters carved on the door. It was an iron plate hidden by the red aura!

‘.....This is it!’

Ark intuitively sensed that this was associated with the method to open the iron door. JusticeMan and the other descendants nodded at Ark’s explanation.

“Certainly.....”

“Huhuhu, you see? Did you see? My action was a good thing.”

Bread puffed out his chest and said. The problem was that the iron plate was covered in the red aura.

‘But the strength of the redness changed after Bread’s attack just now. This means the amount of red aura covering the door is limited. In other words, if we make the attacks stronger than the red spirit will disappear, even if it is only for a little bit!’

“Leave it to me! Gate Destruction!”

Bread swung his greatsword at the door without any hesitation. As expected, the red aura exploded outwards from the impact. At the same time, the rest of the red aura became thin and a part of the iron plate appeared. However, there still remained some red aura in front of the plate. And the red aura went flying towards Bread. At that moment, Lariette and Redian simultaneously yelled.

“Pure Shield!”

“Elemental Shield!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The red fragments impacted with the two shields and caused a crack. Then Bread moved through the shield and brought down his greatsword.

“Now, let’s do it again. Gate Destruction!”

When it impacted with the door, dozens of red fragments extended again. It was a continuous attack of red sharp fragments! Meanwhile the red aura over the iron plate completely disappeared. However, it would only last for a few seconds.

“Now! Jump!”

Ark used Jump and headed towards the iron door. Ark lost 40% health the moment he entered the range of the door’s attack. But he didn’t pay

attention to the damage. Ark used Dark Dance the moment he landed on the floor and rushed towards the door. His hand reached out while the red aura tried to cover up the iron plate again.

‘It’s a success!’

His palm touched the cold surface of the iron plate! At information window surface in front of Ark at the same time!

-Great Creator, Destiny’s mother.....

She carved parts of her own existence to create lives. The world was created thanks to her sacrifice but it was also the birth of the dark god. She is the only key to the exit of this dark world.

-The ‘True Statement’ was discovered.

You have obtained information about an ancient relic. The ‘True Statement’ you found is the only way to escape the Idea Maze. However, the ‘True Statement’ is firmly locked by strong cursed magic. It is a powerful enchantment caused by the dark god of this world. But even if the dark god denies all the presences in New World, Destiny’s Mother is enough to breathe life into them.

The name of Destiny’s Mother is the only way to open the true door. You have acquired information about the ‘True Statement.’

<Knowledge of Ancient Relics +40, Intelligence +15 and Fame increased by 100>

Pajijjik!

The iron plate was covered with the red aura again and Ark flew back. JusticeMan and the heroes’ descendants instantly approached and asked.

“Ark, did you find something?”

“Yes. I roughly know what to do.”

Ark laughed while sitting in the dirt. In fact, the words on the iron plate didn't tell him how to open the door. But the information window which immediately appeared afterwards caught his eye. It said that the name of the Creator, Destiny's Mother was required to open the iron door. Didn't that mean the Creator's name was needed to open the door?

'Then the person who will know the answer.....'

"Lariette-nim, do you know the name of the Creator who is also called Destiny's Mother?"

Yes, Lariette!

Once again, Lariette's profession was an affiliation of a priest. After changing to an Innocence Knight, and now a Saint Knight, she had read relevant books on theology to raise her faith and intelligence stat. After Seutandal rose, Lariette had read an absurd number of theology books in the underground library of the Cathedral. It was why she didn't take part in a lot of action after Seutandal rose. If she read that many books then of course she would know the Creator's name.

"Huh? The name of the Creator?"

However Lariette's reaction was unexpected.

"The theology books that I've read have many references to the Creator and Destiny's Mother. But there are no books that go into detail about her. And the original name is written in the books. When praising the Creator's achievements, the only reference is 'the glory of the Great Creator'."

'What does that mean?'

Ark became confused by Lariette's words. All the holy bibles of this world were contained in the Cathedral at Selebrid. Even Lariette who read all the bibles didn't know the name of the Creator?

'If the name isn't listed in the bibles.....wait?'

The book that Ark had just picked up popped into his mind. The Holy Bible of the Dark Church!

‘Yes, that makes sense. The Creator’s name wasn’t listed in any of the bibles of the light. Then maybe the key lay in the book of the dark church..... The holy bibles in the Cathedral praised her achievements and erased her name so it might be recorded in the bible of the dark church!’

Ark reached this conclusion. Usually a problem in New World always had an answer nearby. Then the key to exit the Idea Maze must be somewhere in this dungeon. So Ark took out the Bible of the Dark Church and read it.

‘.....Nothing!’

Ark’s answer was half correct and half wrong. As expected, the Creator was referenced a few times in the dark bible. However, the dark bible also didn’t provide her name.

“Cade, Elliana, Casellian.....!”

The upset Ark tried to shout a few names but the iron door didn’t even tremble.

“Ark, there’s only 20 minutes left!”

JusticeMan’s voice was heard from behind Ark. Ark flinched and saw that the 3D maze was rapidly melting. Cracks were spreading while some fragments of the maze disappeared without a trace. After a while, the square where the attack squad members used to be gathered broke and crumbled into pieces.

‘We came all the way here in vain.....’

Ark let out a devastated moan. Suddenly he discovered something in the swirling space. Floating in the dark space were some memory crystals! To be exact, he hadn’t discovered it now. He saw it when they first entered this space but he hadn’t paid it any attention. After being

trapped in the maze, they had suddenly been attacked by the Evil Thoughts so he had no time to be interested in the memory crystals. But in this situation, he felt refreshed as he saw them. And he recalled the information window that appeared the first time he entered the maze.

-If you want to escape from the Idea Maze then you should find the hidden truth.

'A secret truth is hidden in the darkness!'

The memory crystals floating in the Idea Maze contained the dark memories. And the iron door said that the Creator was an existence that the darkness couldn't deny. Then wouldn't the name of the mother of the world be recorded in the memories?

'If there is a problem in New World then a clue is always hidden nearby.'

This was true. However, the hint wasn't the bible Maseutyu dropped but the dungeon itself. Ark thought about throwing away the Bible of the Dark Church and shouted.

"Burning Soul, transform into Pendragon!"

At the same time, flames engulfed Burning Soul and he turned into a dragon. JusticeMan asked with confusion as Ark got on Burning Soul.

"What the? What is it?"

"There's no time to explain!"

Ark just flew away on the back of Burning Soul. Finding the memory crystals wasn't a problem if he flew on Burning Soul. He delayed after Maseutyu died and 40 minutes passed before he discovered a password was necessary. Now there was only 20 minutes left. There was no guarantee that he could find the answers from the memory crystal.

"But I can try. Burning Soul, fly at maximum speed!"

Kurarara, kurarara!

Burning Soul shot flames and flew through the space. After a few minutes, he found the first memory crystal floating in the 3D maze. Ark narrowed the distance and grabbed the memory crystal.

-Kuwwaaaah!

The memory crystal swayed and gave a weird shriek. A vast number of Evil Thoughts with wings appeared in the maze. At the same time an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-The existences created by the dark god won't allow intruders to learn the dark secrets.

'Damn, what does that mean?'

Ark frowned. If he knew that Evil Thoughts would appear when he accessed the memory crystal then he would've been more careful. Well, it was too late to regret that face. The problem was that the Evil Thoughts were elite monsters. Ark was level 497 but he couldn't deal with them alone. No, he came here along so he had no chance of dealing with the Evil Thoughts.

"Burning Soul, circle to the right side!"

Burning Soul rapidly turned his body and moved to the right flank of the Evil Thoughts. The Evil Thoughts gathered together and rushed towards Burning Soul. Ark waited for the moment the Evil Thoughts extended their claws and shouted.

"Riposte!"

Ku ku ku kung!

The Evil Thoughts at the front were pushed back and pushed the ones behind them as well. Once a flying demon lost their centre of balance, it took time for them to recover. While the demons were busy recovering, Ark grabbed the memory crystal. Then some haze images appeared in front of Ark.

‘.....Eh? What’s this?’

Ark just became even more baffled. This was the area created by the dark god. Naturally the memories in the crystal would be about the dark god. Therefore Ark had expected a memory about hell or something similar. The video that surface was different from expected. It wasn’t about hell or even New World.

‘This is.....reality?’

That’s right. The video from the memory crystal was surprisingly of the real world. Ark immediately realized it was reality because of the background in the video. With white walls, a white bed and countless beeping machines, it was the familiar sight of a patient in hospital.

‘.....Why is a video of reality appearing from the memory crystal?’

A woman sitting on the bed appeared in front of the confused Ark. The background was that of the ICU and the woman was clearly sick. She wore a hat to cover the shaved hair from surgery and her lips were a pale blue. Even Ark with no medical knowledge knew that death was imminent. However, she sat down and continued typing something in the laptop despite sweating heavily. She had a fierce determination in the face of death. Then Ark heard an eerie voice filled with anger in his head.

-Dammit, dammit!

The video started shaking roughly. Another message window appeared in front of Ark.

-You have gained information hidden in the ‘divine dark memory’ using knowledge of ancient relics.

<Knowledge of Ancient Relics +10, Intelligence +10, Luck +5, Fame has increased by 50>

“What the, this is? What is this? This is a divine dark memory?”

Ark's thoughts wandered down an even more complicated labyrinth after watching the memory crystal. Why on earth was a video about the real world shown in the memory crystal? What the hell was going on?

-Kuwwaaaah!

Then the Evil Thoughts that had recovered flew towards him.

"Damn, I don't know what this is. Burning Soul, magic sword."

Ark suddenly made Burning Soul turn. Burning Soul spat out a magic sword and Ark shouted.

"Take this! Blade Tempest!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

It seemed like magic exploded from Burning Soul's mouth. The Evil Thoughts were circled by thousands of blade fragments and pushed back several metres.

"Burning Soul, move to the next memory crystal!"

Meanwhile Ark flew towards another memory crystal on Burning Soul. He might be confused by the first memory crystal but he still hoped to find the password from it. If the memory crystal wasn't important, why was the Evil Thoughts protecting it? There was 16 minutes left so he couldn't afford to waste time. If he couldn't find the correct answer from the memory crystals then only death remained!

"Dark strike! Riposte! Blood Tempest!"

Ark gradually escaped the Evil Thoughts and checked the memory crystal. But the result was the same after checking 3~4 memory crystals. A woman sitting in the ICU smiling at a video of a flower field, listening to test results from a doctor and the atmosphere when she learnt the disease was fatal. The last video showed someone shedding tears in front of a new grave. Those were the only images that appeared when he

grasped the crystals. And there was nothing related to the Creator in the videos.

Ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku!

By the time Ark stood in front of the last memory crystal, 90% of the maze had collapsed. There was only 6~8 minutes remaining. If he didn't do anything then the attack squad would be buried with the dark space.

"Dammit, what can I do? What should I say?"

-Kuwwaaaaaaaaah!

Ark who was cornered turned his head at the scream. Dozens of Evil Thoughts had almost caught up to him.

"Huck, when did these guys.....Burning Soul.....!"

Ark shouted with surprise as an Evil Thought ran into Burning Soul's side. Burning Soul wobbled against the memory crystal after being pushed. The memory crystal grazed against Ark's hand and a video played. Ark felt his heart jump.

"What, what the? The video showed up in this situation when I'm confronting the monsters."

Ark was complaining petulantly when he suddenly closed his mouth. An unexpected scene caught his eye. This video also showed the sick woman. Normally she was always typing on a laptop but this time she was watching TV. The problem was the commercial that appeared on TV. It was the advertisement for New World that was broadcasted before the game was published! After the commercial finished, the woman turned her head and grinned. And she spoke through cracked lips.

-It's now finished. I'm satisfied with this.

Once again the angry voice spoke in Ark's head.

-That's it? What does that mean?

You dedicated every day of your remaining life to creating this game. And what happened to you? What kind of game is it that you dedicated your life to it, making you suffer and leaving you on the verge of death? Why? For who?

For the irresponsible people going to play the game? Or the publishers receiving this game? No, it can't be! No matter what you say I can't forgive it.

Those damn users and publishers taking advantage of the game that sucked your life.....I'll smash them! I will break that game with my own hands!

'Wait? Perhaps this is.....?'

Ark had a sudden thought. Ark had misunderstood until now. The video only showed the video so he thought she had taken the video. However, the video in the memory crystal wasn't that simple. It was someone's memory! The person the memory belonged to was watching her. The voice that rang through his head was the owner of the memory. The person she was looking at wasn't Ark.

'This isn't a video but someone's memory..... This means that it is impossible for the person to be a general user. Then I can only think that the memory belongs to someone from the publishing company. And the fact that the memory is left in the dark world..... It is created by the dark god.....'

".....Park Woo-seong!"

All the questions that were running through his mind after entering the Idea Maze were answered.

".....Park Woo-seong!"

"Oh my god, is it like that"

Ark was wrong to think that the Red Man and Park Woo-seong was the same person. The Red Man was an auto program created by Park Woo-seong. Park Woo-seong was the creator so his existence surpassed the publishers. Then he was definitely the creator of the Dark Lord and the demons. That's right. The Idea Maze reflected Park Woo-seong's

spiritual world! Then why was Park Woo-seong trying to destroy New World? Ark had secured the flash drive from Park Woo-seong's villa but he still couldn't understand the reason. The flash drive contained fragments of the notes written by Park Woo-seong.

-I can't forgive New World who drove her to her death!

That was a note Ark found imbedded in the flash drive. That's right. This was the reason Park Woo-seong wanted to destroy New World. But Ark didn't know who had died.

He finally started to understand after connected all the memories scattered in the maze.

'Let's think clearly and organize it.'

Ark was able to guess the relationship between Park Woo-seong and the woman after watching the memory crystal. She was one of the creators of New World and the woman Park Woo-seong loved. She caught an incurable disease but didn't stop working until New World was completed.

'Park Woo-seong wanted her to stop the work and concentrate on medical treatment. But she still continued to push herself and worked on her sickbed. Park Woo-seong couldn't understand the reason why. And after a while he realized why.'

A number of bad posts appeared on the website about New World that she managed! New World was the face of Global Exos so it received a lot of information from the planning and creation stage. In order to implement a perfect virtual reality, they delayed the release several times. The users' interest in the game was big so there was a flood of complaints every time it became behind schedule. Park Woo-seong just shut himself in his laboratory so he wasn't bothered by the complaints. Then he found the file of curses stored on her laptop.

-It was this!

Park Woo-seong firmly believed it. This was the reason she kept on working despite suffering from her illness! No, she probably caught the disease because of stress from the curses! The commercialization of New World happened at the same moment she died so Park Woo-seong was filled with rage. She got sick because of the millions of users in New World.

-I will challenge all the users of New World!

This was the notice Park Woo-seong sent after the funeral and he disappeared. Of course, Park Woo-seong's vengeful determination might just seem like stubbornness. However, Ark could understand Park Woo-seong's fury. Ark also loved his mother who suffered from illness. And if..... He would hate to think about what would happen if..... He didn't know what he would do if his mother died. He would probably want revenge on anyone connected to his mother's death. Ark also wouldn't have been able to endure it. Park Woo-seong's target was New World. But there was still one point that didn't make sense to Ark. If Park Woo-seong wanted to destroy New World then there must be an easier way. Park Woo-seong was the main person in charge of creating New World. Couldn't he wreak havoc on the main system with one press of a button? So why was he proceeding with such a complicated way?

'Is there a reason he can't do that? Maybe he lost his access privileges after disappearing..... Or maybe his revenge could only be satisfied by winning in a confrontation with the users of New World? But that wasn't the important thing now!

He could examine this information later. The important thing was finding the password to open the 'Truth Statement.'

"There is one truth that can't be denied even if the dark space. The Creator carved out her life to make New World..... All of this leads to one password!"

The thoughts flashed through his head after watching the information.

“Burning Soul, magic sword, Blade Tempest!”

A magic sword shot from Burning Soul’s mouth and exploded. Then Ark grabbed the horns and shouted.

“There’s only 5 minutes left so there is no time to delay. Burning Soul!”

Kurarara, kurarara!

Burning Soul flew across the dark space. But even Burning Soul couldn’t lose the Evil Thoughts using ‘quick.’

-Kuwwaaaah!

A number of Evil Thoughts escape from the blade storm and chased him. A few of them caught up to Burning Soul’s tail in an instant.

“Damn, Moon light illusion! Lure all of them!”

Three or four clones of Ark appeared and the monsters gathered around them. They quickly died but by that time Burning Soul had already extended the distance to dozens of metres. But Burning Soul was surrounded after being chased for 1 minute. The number of Evil Thoughts had increased by 20 each time he touched a memory crystal! If they attacked simultaneously then it would be difficult for Burning Soul to avoid them.

“Ark!”

“He’s being chased by Evil Thoughts!”

“Attack! Support Ark with magic and arrows!”

He heard the cries of the attack squad at that moment. That’s right. Burning Soul had already arrived at the area where the attack squad was waiting. A shower of magic and arrows interrupted the Evil Thoughts. Ark’s eyes flashed and he shouted.

“Burning soul, charge! Dark strike!”

Ark swung his sword and pierced through the siege. Thanks to the magic and arrows, there was a large gap where Ark could pass through. But Ark wasn't looking at the Evil Thoughts anymore. There was only 2 minutes remaining so the area where the attack squad was gathered was starting to collapse. If he was even a little bit late then the attack squad would be buried in this space. Ark rushed towards the iron door and shouted.

"Yuna!"

That's right. Yuna. It was the name of Park Woo-seong's lover that appeared dozens of times in his notes. When Ark cried out the name Yuna.....

The firmly closed iron door trembled and emitted a brilliant, glowing light. The Evil Thoughts heading towards Ark hardened like stone from the glow. And their black bodies gradually turned to ashes and scattered. Ark flew to the door as it opened and shouted.

"Everybody escape to the exit!"

"Let's go!"

The attack squad hurriedly flocked to the exit. The square collapsed the moment the last member's body jumped through the exit.

Act 6: The Dark Lord

Cheolkeok.

"Owaaaaah!"

800 of the attack squad members collapsed through the door. The attack squad had wandered the Idea Maze for almost 10 hours. The forlorn hope of exiting the maze in time gradually disappeared. Now it didn't matter.

“Reform your battle positions!”

Ark stood up and shouted. Fortunately they managed to escape from the Idea Maze and entered the dome within the time limit. However, he couldn't afford to sigh with relief. The Dark Lord's resurrection ceremony was taking place in this dome! Of course there would be some demons as the last line of defense.

“1st battalion, 2nd battalion and 3rd battalion, form defense lines!”

“Magicians and archers support the warriors!”

As expected, the experienced users raised their bodies and held their positions. They were prepared for the demons' attacks but the inside of the dome was dead quiet. He couldn't see the expected thousands of demons or any preparations for the resurrection ceremony.

‘What the? Surely it is taking place here.....’

Ark's eyes looked at the blank space.

“Ark, over there.”

Shambala muttered in a low voice. Ark used ‘Eyes of the Cat’ and the shape of a man appeared in the darkness. He was a man with red hair and wearing a white mask.

“..... The Red Man!”

That's right. The Red Man was the main source behind this event. The Red Man responded to Ark's voice.

“Huhuhu, you came all the way here but.....”

“Catechism Dance!”

The Red Man was proceeding with the resurrection ceremony. How long did it take for Ark and the attack squad to get here? And how many expedition members lost their lives? All that effort and sacrifice was to stop the Red Man in front of them. Their target was right in front of

them so why did they need to talk? When the Red Man revealed his form, Ark, Shambala, Bread, Redian, Lariette, Timosi and Wormer all turned their bodies simultaneously without speaking. Hundreds of years ago, the 7 heroes in the Dark Century was also facing the same situation as their descendants.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

At the same time, there was a roar and countless attacks flew towards the place where the Red Man was. It was extravagant power! Not even the Red Man would be unscathed from these attacks!

“What, what the, this feeling is?”

“The Red Man.....”

However, Ark and the heroes’ descendants were the ones baffled. They clearly used their knockdown techniques on the Red Man. He confirmed with his own eyes that his sword was driven into that guy’s vital spot. But while he saw it with his eyes, he didn’t feel it in his hands. All the attacks just went through the Red Man’s body.

“.....It is already too late.

Then the Red Man’s voice was heard from behind them. Ark flinched and turned around. The Red Man was standing in a huge crater and his form started to gradually blur. His body became transparent and faded away.

“What the? Spatial movement?”

Burning Soul, use Stalking to keep track of his location!”

Ark thought the Red Man had used Warp to run away.

-Burning Soul has used Stalking but failed to track the location.

<There was a mistake with the target or the command was inaccurate>

‘What? There was a mistake with the target or the command was inaccurate?’

Ark couldn’t understand what that meant. Redian also moved to the place where the Red Mana disappeared and used Mana Detection before shouting.

“Ark, he didn’t use spatial movement. He wasn’t here in the first place!”

“What? Then where is he?”

“I don’t know.....”

Redian was answering when she suddenly closed her mouth. She looked up at the ceiling and paled before screaming.

“.....B-back up, everybody back up!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Redian screamed and then the ceiling of the dome exploded. Ark shouted towards the attack squad.

“Damn, is it another trap? Everybody prepare for falling rocks!”

The attack squad raised their shields after hearing Ark’s command. However, the ceiling shattered into many pieces and scattered hundreds of metres away. It felt like pressure had built up in the dome until it suddenly exploded the ceiling.

“What the hell? What just happened?”

The attack squad couldn’t understand the phenomenon and murmured noisily.

Dukong, dukong, dukong, dukong!

Then there was a massive ringing sound and the whole space started shaking. Their nerves were already tense so the attack squad looked

around with uneasy eyes. Then Redian who was looking absent-mindedly up at the sky stiffened.

“T-t-t-there.....!”

“That’s impossible, the Dark.....”

Everybody focused on something descending in the darkness. It was a distinct shape in the darkness. Like a newly escape moth, an existence with eight flapping wings descended slowly towards the dome! The head had 6 weirdly twisted horns and eyes as red as blood. Sharp fangs peeked out from the open mouth and there was a black aura around it. It was unmistakably the shape of a demon! But the attack squad wasn’t frozen because of the outward form. The monster had a giant 100 metres frame.

Kukung!

It stared vacantly at the attack squad as it landed on the floor. The flapping wings and huge form cause the floor to vibrate. At the same time, a warning message appeared in front of all the expedition members around Kwarian Island.

-The elite boss, Dark Lord ‘Lucifer’ has appeared.

“Oh my god! H-how come.....?”

A confused moan emerged from Ark’s mouth as he checked the blinking warning on the upper right corner.

-Somewhere in the darkness of the world, the Dark Lord’s resurrection ceremony has begun!

<Time remaining until the Dark Lord’s resurrection: 1 hour and 50 minutes>

Kuoooooh!

The whole area was wrapped in silence. Time seemed to stop for 1 second. Not even the sound of wind or waves was heard. The expedition members, the demons and even Mother Nature appeared to be overwhelmed by the huge presence above the Rwigenberg. The existence was revealed in front of all the expedition members. And the warning message wasn't necessary at all. The thousands of expedition members turned pale in fear from the overwhelming power.

That's right. The Dark Lord that terrorised the world hundreds of years ago.... He had the name of the ruler of hell, Lucifer!

"Oh my god.....!"

A hopeless groan emerged from the mouths of the expedition members around Kwarian. The expedition members fighting thousands of demons lost all their motivation as Lucifer appeared. They felt despair because the 'Dark Lord had been resurrected.' They lost their will after discovering that the Dark Lord had been restored. But the despair of the attack squad was different. They were subjected to the tremendous power of Lucifer close up that it was even difficult to breathe. Furthermore, they hadn't fallen into confusion simply because of Lucifer's appearance. The attack squad stuttered.

"T-this is..... What's going on?"

"The resurrection time..... Isn't it still unfinished?"

"Then why on earth..... Is there some deficit?"

"Something, something..... Is wrong!"

This was the reason why the attack squad members were in a state of panic. Lucifer had appeared! Yet wasn't there still 1 hour and 50 minutes left? The attack squad held it in and only rushed to the restroom during the spare time in order to thwart the resurrection. After all that trouble, they had barely arrived with 1 hour and 50 minutes left. So why had Lucifer revived earlier than the predetermined time? What sort of absurd situation was this?

“This is.....”

Ark stared at the warning message in the corner which blinked and updated. The timer was still counting down to Lucifer’s resurrection. It was to the extent that Ark felt like shooting Dark Strike at the warning message. Moreover, Lucifer wasn’t the only one threatening the attack squad.

-Grrrrrrrr.

Thousands of demons had flocked towards the dome before the entered the Idea Maze! Now the demons were heading towards the attack squad.

‘I don’t know how it happened but Lucifer is already revived. And we are surrounded by thousands of demons. The only choices left is to give up and die or attack and risk dying.’

As always, the answer was clear once the choices were narrowed. Wasn’t it better to die swinging a sword then just watching?

‘Besides, it isn’t 100% decided that we’re defeated!’

But the morale of the attack squad was already on the ground. Even if he cried out for a battle charge, it wouldn’t have that much effect.

‘However.....’

Ark thought for a bit before using Intimidation.

“You morons, wake up! As you probably know, our appearance is being broadcasted all over the world through my eye. Your friends, families or lovers might be watching. Are you going to give them the impression that you’re scared of a monster in an online game? Then any members who want to should run away now. All those watching will brand them as cowards!”

“..... Now you are threatening your forces with such a trivial thing. Just like Hitler.”

Shambala shook his head at Ark's threat. However Ark's threat had an enormous effect.

"Ah, that reminds me!"

The frozen attack squad members winced and started moving. That's right. Every battlefield around Kwarian was being broadcasted on most TV stations around the world. But the game exclusive news broadcasting the scene from Ark's eye had the highest audience rating. In other words, the whole world was watching the video where the attack squad were the main characters. So thousands of encouragement appeared on the internet during each battle. That was the driving force behind Ark's threat. If they shrank back then they would be labelled as a coward from the public on the internet. And there was a possibility that their friends would also act the same. Lucifer had an impact on their real lives! Thus the attitude of the attack squad changed by 180 degrees.

"W-who is frightened?"

"Lucifer isn't scary at all!"

"Isn't the Dark Lord just a monster?"

The attack squad shouted as they spewed nonsense.

"Yes, nothing has changed. Our purpose was to prevent the Dark Lord's resurrection and that just changed to defeating the Dark Lord. Even if we die, giving up doesn't exist for us. No matter what happens, we have to do our best to kill the Dark Lord!"

"Ohhhhhh!"

The attack squad simultaneously raised their arms and screamed.

-Kuwaaaaaaaah!

At the same time, the demons circling the square shrieked and ran up. It was impossible no matter how much their morale had climbed. The 800

attack squad members could barely deal with the thousands of demons let alone Lucifer. But Ark was still giving out orders.

“If we stay on the ground then the odds aren’t in our favour! Everybody board the flying boats!”

That’s right. The flying boats that the attack squad used to burst into Rwigenberg! The battlefield had moved outside the dome so it was possible to board the flying boats. It wasn’t necessary to pay attention to the demons with the flying boats. In addition, it would be easier to deal with the 100 metres large Lucifer.

Buaaaah! Buaaaah!

The attack squad climbed onto the flying board and flew off in unison. Ark also flew into the sky on the transformed Burning Soul and exclaimed.

“Enter your formations. Attack!”

The several hundred flying boats charged towards Lucifer. The warriors holding shields and swords surrounded Lucifer while the magicians and archers poured out a shower of attacks.

“Heroic Strike!”

“The power of light to destroy the dark, Ray!”

“Arrow piercing the darkness!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Lucifer’s body was enveloped in flashes and detonations. Lucifer stumbled and took one step back.

“That’s it. He’s stumbling!”

“That is evidence that we’re not impervious to our attacks! We can win!”

“That Lucifer bastard, he’s no big deal! He also didn’t counterattack!”

The attack squad fired their skills even more desperately after seeing Lucifer's reaction.

Hwaaaaack!

The detonations were suddenly sucked in by something. It was inhaled by Lucifer's enormous mouth that gradually became wider. He had sucked in all the detonations just by taking a breath. But that wasn't what shocked the attack squad.

"What the, that is?"

"He didn't even receive one scratch from the attacks?"

While the health of the opponents couldn't be determined in New World, there were various methods to determine the damage received. For example, the durability of the armour would decrease so it would become dented or bruises would appear on the skin. However, Lucifer's body didn't show one wound despite receiving the concentrated attacks.

"No way! It's a scam!"

The attack squad protested strongly but Lucifer didn't listen to them. Instead hundreds of red rays shot from his mouth after he swallowed the detonations.

"W-what is going on? Iron wall defense!"

"Use Willpower Exchange and then your shields!"

"Great Mana, be a shield. Absolute Shield!"

The warriors freaked out and lifted their shields while the magicians in the rear used wide area shield magic through Willpower Exchange. But the red rays from Lucifer's mouth shattered the defences and pierced the heads of the attack squad.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Dozens of deep red flames welled up at the same time. The ensuing devastation poured cold water on the moral of the attack squad. Everything became chaos from the effect of the bombs. Those within range of the wide area magic lost 30~50% health while the flying boats became tattered or crashed. But that wasn't the end.

-Kwaaaaa!

The members in the boats that crashed to the ground were shredded within seconds by the demons. The sight of their colleagues becoming dog food (?) made all their fears surface again.

-Mayflies..... These guys.....!

Then Lucifer spoke in an eerie voice. His full length was 100 metres! When the huge figure around the size of a 25 storey building moved, the entire ground shook. Lucifer waved his palm and swept through dozens of metres.

"Huck! S-scatter!"

"It's too late! Block!"

The warriors freaked out and simultaneously lifted their shields. However, the relative arm length of a 100 metre monster was 50 metres. The shield couldn't help against the weight behind the arm that reached hundreds of tons.

"Waaahhhh!"

The warriors screamed as it felt like they were hit by a truck and were thrown backwards.

..... Once again their levels, skills and equipment were some of the strongest in New World. The same was true for other professions but the warriors' attacks and defense were especially on a different level. Every time they levelled up, they gained all sorts of passive skills. As the warriors were always in the front of a party and had the role of a tank, it was important that they learnt 'shock absorption' and various other

defensive skills. They used their best defensive skill 'Iron wall defense' and still flew like a fly.

"This is the level 1,500 elite boss Lucifer.....!"

Ark groaned. That's right. Ark used Eyes of the Cat and determined that Lucifer was level 1,500. It was a standard that the level 497 Ark couldn't imagine! That was 4 times the attack squad who had an average level of 350~370! Furthermore, he was an elite boss! It wasn't an exaggeration to say he was a divine monster. In addition, if the attack squad fell then they would be destroyed by the thousands of demons running amok on the ground.

"We'll be wiped out in a few minutes."

If the airships penetrated Rwigenberg's shield then there was a chance to overcome the crisis. But the airships hadn't been able to concentrate their attacks on the shield thanks to the demons' interference. The intermittent attacks weren't able to surpass the recovery speed of the shield.

"..... Is it impossible to defeat him?"

Thousands of demons and Lucifer! Somehow he had to deal with them using 800 people. In the end, Ark's expression was despairing as he looked at Lucifer.

"Stupid bastard, why are you staring dumbly instead of fighting?"

Then he heard Shambala's voice from behind him. Shambala had flown next to Ark and looked at him with a disgusted expression.

"What are you thinking? You're the one that said he was still a monster no matter how strong! The attack squad believed you and are risking their lives but what are you doing?"

His words penetrated Ark's head and he heard other shouts.

“Don’t pay any attention to the demons on the ground. Concentrate all attacks on Lucifer!”

“We can’t prevent Lucifer from attacking. Scatter and expand the battlefield!”

“Magicians and archers withdraw to the furthest possible distance and attack!”

“Take this, Heroes’ Aaaaack!”

The attack squad had been desperately fighting against Lucifer while Ark was discouraged. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members led each unit to hurl their skills at Lucifer. Compared to Lucifer, they were just like a swarm of flies and each sweep of Lucifer’s arm caused the flying boats to crash. Despite that, the attack squad were still frantically fighting until the end.

‘Yes, I can’t give up yet!’

Ark bit his lips and raised his head.

Shambala, Bread, Redian, Lariette, Wormer and Timosi! Formation A!”

Ark grabbed Burning Soul and flew towards Lucifer while shouting.

“Bah, our strong point is persevering like a cockroach.”

“Oh, now’s the time to show my skills!”

Shambala and Bread smiled and rushed towards Lucifer with Ark. The remaining members scattered and formed a circle around Lucifer.

“Area Proclamation, Glory of the Night!”

-Glory of the Night has been used.

<When within a 100 metre radius, your attack and defense will increase by 50% and magic resistance by 20%>

“Area Declaration, River of Blood!”

“Area Declaration, Land of the Beast!”

Ark used Area Declaration and Shambala and Bread followed. When the 100~200 metres range of Area Declaration was used, the three people perfectly circled Lucifer. After Ark, Shambala and Bread used Area Declaration, Lariette, Timosi, Redian and Wormer surrounded them and used Area Declaration.

“Area Declaration, Land of Purification!”

“Area Declaration, Exorcist!”

“Area Declaration, Land of Fire and Ice!”

“Area Declaration, Infinite Energy Field!”

The heroes’ descendants surrounded Lucifer with two layers of Area Declaration. This was the A formation that Ark thought of. Once again, the members with the highest attack power were the heroes’ descendants. Therefore their Area Declarations would have the biggest impact on the demons! Ark, Shambala and Bread attacked Lucifer. Wormer, Timosi and Redian covered them with long ranged attacks while Lariette was in charge of recovery magic. This was why most of the attack squad didn’t use Area Declaration despite changing to their 2nd professions. Currently the battlefield was only around 600~700 metres. If the attack squad members used Area Declaration then the heroes’ descendants wouldn’t be able to. If the heroes’ descendants used it first then the situation would change.

“Everybody leave the range of their Area Declarations and use your own as much as possible. However, it is important to use the Area Declaration that would influence the whole unit!”

The attack squad scattered and invoked Area Declaration in a suitable area. It was mainly the priests’ whose Area Declarations would give a buff effect.

“All members move to the Area Declaration that suits you most. And protect the priests using Area Declaration. The remaining priests focus on healing the ones using Area Declaration.”

Thanks to Ark's quick commands, a huge formation was built with Lucifer in the centre. And a perfect formation was completed within moments! Ark's eyes flashed and he shouted.

“This is an all-out attack. Dark Strike!”

“Gwae, yeong, byeol, cham!”

“Lightning Storm!”

Ark, Shambala and Bread let out a shower of attacks. At the same time Lariette, Redian, Timosi and Wormer used various skills from the rear.

“Set of 3 attack buffs! The great warrior's soul..... Hero's Spirit, Warrior's Concentration, Storm Breathing!”

“High speed incantation, highest magic seal release! The unquenchable flame burning in the bottom of hell! Under the name of the Elemental Master Redian, descend to this land! Volcano of Hell!”

“Skill seal release, Matanyi Shooter no. 6, Demon Annihilating Light Arrows!”

“Armoured suit, Electric Missile launch!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The special moves of the heroes' descendants were buffed by Lariette and the Area Declarations. Ark, Bread and Shambala's swords flashed while Redian and Timosi's attacks exploded. Meanwhile Wormer continued bombarding Lucifer with missiles from his armoured suit. However, this was just the beginning. Hundreds of attacks exploded on Timosi's body as the attack squad used their skills. However.....

-Kukukukukuku, is this it?

Eerie laughter was heard from among the explosions. In the next moment, the explosions were sucked in and the red rays fired again.

“Huck! S-scatter!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwang! Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwang!

Cries of distress were heard from all around Ark and dozens of flying boats crashed from the red rays. They had just used their strongest attack! But the results were no different. Lucifer just inflicted a counterattack and dozens of flying boats fell. Despite receiving the huge attacks, Lucifer’s attacks hadn’t even been reduced by 0.1%.

“U-unbelievable!”

“Our attacks didn’t do any damage?”

The attack squad moaned desperately. However Ark’s eyes just glittered.

‘No, this attack did work!’

In fact, Ark hadn’t understood until now. But when attacking from a close distance, it was impossible not to notice.

‘The attacks were concentrated on one spot and the black aura disappeared. However it was restored again. I’m sure that the black body isn’t his body but a type of shield. It is similar to the shield protecting the Rwigenberg. Then it is possible to use the same method to pierce it!’

Ark had figured out Lucifer’s secret. Despite being a level 1,500 elite boss, he couldn’t accept that all the attacks boosted by Area Declarations only did 0.1% damage. At that moment, the attack squad members completely lost their will again. But that was just a trick. They had only been beating away at Lucifer’s shell which was a shield.

‘There is only one way to beat that guy!’

It was the method the Shangri-La used to penetrate the shield! Ark considered a moment before raising his voice.

“From now on the attack squad will divide into three units and will rotate your attacks! The 1st battalion will attack with me, 2nd battalion with Shambala and 3rd battalion with Bread. Concentrate all your attacks on one point!”

That’s right. If the shield couldn’t be removed in one blow then they should deal continuous damage that would overcome the shield’s recovery rate. Of course, it wasn’t possible to scratch Lucifer’s shield with the attacks of several hundred people. But even if it was protecting Lucifer, it was still just a shield. Then Lucifer seemed upset by Ark’s words and swung his arm towards Ark. Ark rose vertically and avoided the attack.

“1st battalion, go. Dark Strike!”

The dark assimilated sword was driven into Lucifer’s body and exploded. At the same time, the 1st battalion all concentrated their attacks on that area.

“Precision Shot!”

“Blazing flames of anger, Impact Fire!”

Lucifer’s face glared. But Ark just focused his attention on that one spot and attacked. The relentless attacks damaged that one spot, causing the black aura to warp and explode. And a disgusting black skin crawling with maggots was shown.

‘That’s it. That is Lucifer’s real body hidden behind the shield!’

“Shambala, now!”

“Okay, Sword Spree!”

Shambala brandished his daggers towards that spot at the same time. The black aura opened again and revealed the maggot infested skin.

“Keep on attacking!”

The 2nd battalion continuously hit him same spot, causing the sound of iron touching skin to occur and Lucifer's skin twitched. Finally the 3rd battalion attacked and black blood welled up.

"It is working!"

Ark observed Lucifer at a distance with a smile of satisfaction. He used Eyes of the Cat and saw that his health had started to gradually decreased. Of course, Lucifer had incredibly high health so that wasn't a great deal of damage. But dealing damage now meant there was a chance. The success of this attack was significant.

-Kuwwaaaaaaaaah!

Ark looked down at the thousands of demons on the ground. The demons were jumping and waving their claws but they failed to even come close to the flying boats.

"There is no way for the demons to attack us while riding the flying boats. And we just have to be careful of a glow from Lucifer's mouth. If Shambala and Bread grasps the attack pattern of the arms then it won't be difficult to avoid. Even if it has to take several hours, his health will eventually reach the bottom!"

That was the overall strategy Ark planned.

-Mayflies..... You dare wound this body.....!

Lucifer whined as he was scratched by the hundreds of attack squad members and rushed to Ark. The Dark Lord Lucifer seemed like a three year old child having a tantrum. But even if his spirit was 3 years old, his body was equivalent to a 25 storey body. One wrong move would mean death!

"Burning Soul, circle to the right and escape from his range of attack!"

Ark remembered the demons on the ground and hurriedly yelled towards Burning Soul. However, his reaction was slow and Lucifer's

palm caught Burning Soul. Meanwhile Lucifer's palm descended towards Ark's head.

"Ark-nim! Divine Skill, 'Aegis, Shield of Fanaticism!'"

At that moment, thousands of shields rushed from Lariette's body. It stacked in thin air and formed a giant shield in front of Ark.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

There was a roar as Lucifer's palm hit the shield. When his first attack was blocked, Lucifer frowned and swung his fist from the opposite side. Lariette moved the shield and it bounced back Lucifer's fist. It was a huge iron shield that moved according to the will of its creator! This was the Divine Skill that Lariette learnt from Shangri-La! The Divine Skill of the Saint Knight had the ability to stop 80% of attacks. When his two continuously attacks were blocked, Lucifer's eyes narrowed and flashed.

-Kuack! This shield is the power of fanaticism.... That's right. These guys around me must be the descendants.....

"Okay, now it's our turn!"

"Waaahhhhhhhh!"

The attack squad murmured once Lariette blocked Lucifer's attack. However, the regained morale only lasted a moment.

-If they are the descendants then I can't afford to mess around. Those guys might be a match for me..... I've been meaning to pay respects to the people who forced my body to become like this..... I'll show you the true powers of darkness.

Ark and the attack squad had been preparing their skills for a counterattack. Lucifer suddenly raised both hands over his head and formed fists. Then a huge circular space spread over the battlefield.

Kwa kwang, kwa kwang, kwa kwang, kwa kwang!

The Area Declarations used by Ark, Shambala, Bread, Lariette, Timosi, Redian and Wormer disappeared. The Divine Skill Shield of Fanaticism also disappeared along with the Area Declaration.

“What, what the? What happened to everybody’s Area Declaration?”

Ark burst out with confusion. The field that Lucifer’s magic covered warped mysteriously and the information window floated in front of Ark.

-Lucifer has used the Area Declaration ‘Hell Boundary!’

The 2 kilometres diameter around Lucifer is influenced by the proclamation.

<Lucifer the Dark Lord is the King of hell and has the ability to pull hell into this world. Lucifer has an unlimited amount of magic and all abilities increase by 20% while the recovery speed of the dark shield increased by 20%. In addition, only users with the highest occupation and the demons can use their Area Declarations. Therefore the effects of all lower ranked Area Declarations are ignored>

“What the, this is?”

Ark looked dumbly at the information window. The demons could use Area Declaration? He had assumed that the Dark Lord was just the highest ranked demon. But the problem was Lucifer’s Hell Boundary. It raised his abilities and even cancelled all the Area Declarations that were lower ranked.

‘Then we have to fight Lucifer who became stronger by 20% without the Area Declaration?’

He instantly became gloomy at the thought of fighting Lucifer in such a state. But Ark realized that it wasn’t necessary to worry about that within the next minute.

-Anger, Fear and Despair..... The three demons that defend hell, Lucifer commands you..... Burn this word with your anger, fear and despair.....

At the same time, an information window appeared in front of Ark. Ark used Eyes of the Cat and Skill Penetration to confirm the information about 'Apocalypse.'

-Lucifer's Divine Skill 'Apocalypse' has been triggered!

Apocalypse is a skill where the three demons submitted to Lucifer with an ancient pledge. When Anger, Fear and Despair are summoned, all enemies within Lucifer's territory will be annihilated by the ultimate destruction spell. The effect will occur after 5 minutes.

<This absolute magic will target all enemies within Lucifer's Area Declaration. However, this spell requires Lucifer and the three demons to sacrifice 50% of their health as payment. When Apocalypse is triggered, it will deal 90,000~100,000 damage to all targets. This will ignore all defense and shields. Lucifer wiped out many brave warriors using Apocalypse in the Dark Century>

"No way!"

Ark's face immediately paled. Ark currently had 9,000 health. This was after using various equipment and profession bonuses. The level 350~370 warriors had approximately 9,000 health while Bread only had 12,000 health. Yet the skill would deal 90,000~100,000 damage? He was a level 1,500 elite boss but wasn't that too much? The spell had a range of 2 kilometres so every user within the range of Rwigenberg would be wiped out. Of course, Ark knew that Lucifer could use the ultimate magic to turn the world to ash. However, Lucifer required several days in order to chant that dark magic. During the time Lucifer was activating that last destruction magic, the 7 heroes and a countless number of brave warriors were able to defeat that power. Then Apocalypse was simpler than that final destruction magic? Its activation time was only 5 minutes. The only way to survive was to retreat from the range within 5 minutes. However, Ark and the attack squad were currently on the Rwigenberg which was enclosed by the shield. Unless they penetrated the shield and ran away then they wouldn't be able to escape the effects of Apocalypse. There was only one way remaining!

“..... Everybody attack! If we don't cancel that spell then we'll be wiped out!”

Ark yelled and ran up to Lucifer. Yes, the only way to cancel the spell was to concentrate their attacks on Lucifer! Everybody was defenseless when chanting spells. In order to use Apocalypse, Lucifer needed to recite an incredibly long spell. Getting a critical hit would automatically cancel the magic. However, there was no reaction from Lucifer despite their efforts. They had only dealt 1~2% damage to Lucifer when Area Declaration was used. It was impossible to cancel Lucifer's ultimate magic when Area Declaration had vanished.

After hopelessly attacking for 5 minutes.....

“T-there.....”

One of the attack squad members turned pale white and stuttered. Groans also emerged from the members who raised their heads.

“T-those devils..... The devils!”

Ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku!

There was a deafening sound from the dark sky. A huge devil was slowly descending. It was three devils with their arms and legs mysteriously twisted together! They were the three devils names Anger, Fear and Despair. As soon as the devils appeared, dark clouds poured heavy rain and lightning flashed here and there.

–Destroy my enemy..... Divine Skill Apocalypse!

Lucifer's destruction magic was completed.

Kwang, kwang, kwang, kwang, kwang!

The three devils opened their eyes and thousands of rays shot out. It was Lucifer's destruction spell Apocalypse that they couldn't stop! The members hit by the light were wrapped in flames. They lost health at a tremendous speed and became charcoal in just 10 seconds. It didn't

matter if they used the shield to block as the victims were swallowed up by the flames. The flying boats also crashed and exploded after their owners burnt.

“M-Master!”

Curio stuttered in a frightened voice as he saw the pile of charcoal. Ark bit his lip and ran away from the red light while shouting.

“Damn, release all summons! Waahhhhhh!”

Ark was engulfed in the red light as soon as his summons were sent back. He felt an unbelievable amount of pain as his health was drained. His health reached the ground in 10 seconds.

‘D-dammit! All in vain.....’

Ark looked around as he was turned to charcoal. Everything was finished. None of the attack squad could resist Lucifer’s magic and were turned to charcoal. The airships and expedition members watching the result from outside the shield also became soulless. Their last hope had been wiped out so New World would be destroyed. Lucifer looked at the pile of charcoal on the ground and ordered the demons.

-Dark seeds, dispose of the remaining scum!

-Kurwarwarwarwa!

The demons flocked towards the expedition members who lost their fighting spirit.

‘No, no! I can’t give up! Absolutely not! Just one..... One more chance!’

Ark bit his lip as he watched the scene. Then something unimaginable happened. Ark had been turning into black charcoal when his bag shook and a thick book flew into the sky.

‘Eh? T-that is..... The Immortal Book?’

That's right. It was the Immortal Book he received after defeating Magura. Ark had tried to get information about the Immortal Book many times. It was the treasure of the Fire Draconians and he expected something from its name. But no matter what he tried, Ark wasn't able to read the Immortal Book. Therefore he placed it in his bag and forgot about it until it spontaneously flew into the sky.

And.....

Act 7: Second Coming of a Legend

Ark heard a solemn voice in his head.

-Truly immortal souls are those that don't yield to hardships and adversity!

Ark couldn't understand what was going on. Although he could still think and see, his body was dead and turned to charcoal. So who was talking to the dead Ark?

'W-who?'

-On behalf of the Creator and Destiny's Mother who gave birth to all living creatures, I've been entrusted to take care of this Immortal Book.

'Destiny's Mother? The Immortal Book?'

Based on the information acquired from the Idea Maze, Destiny's Mother was one of the game creators called Yuna. The fact that she was known as the Creator and Destiny's Mother meant she was responsible for all the scenarios and NPC's AI in New World. The AI was no different from the life of an NPC while the scenario was the NPC's destiny.

-The Creator and Destiny's Mother predicted that this world would be threatened by a dark future. But at that time, the life expectancy of Destiny's Mother was already finished. Therefore the last thing she did was create me.

And she said. 'You will experience the world through many people's hands from now on. If you watch the world and want to live in a world where countless lives are truly happy then entrust this book to a warrior when there is a period of darkness.'

Destiny's Mother wanted me to ask the warrior. What does New World mean to you?

'What does New World mean to me.....?'

New World was the next generation of an online game! When he started New World two years ago, he wouldn't have needed to think about the answer. It was a method to join Global Exos and gain a stable income. However, New World soon changed to a method to make money.

'What about now? Is New World still just a way to make money?'

He thought about it. He still believed those reasons a short time ago. But when he first heard that the Red Man was trying to revive the Dark Lord, the first thing Ark thought of wasn't money but New World. He didn't want to admit it but New World became like an actual world to him. Over the last two years Ark had met his summons, countless numbers of NPCs and users and experienced numerous adventures. The thing he was most fearful about was that all of those things would disappear in an instant. That's right. New World wasn't simply an online game to Ark anymore.

'.....This is the door that leads to another world!'

Ark thought those words in his head. The Immortal Book was silent for a moment before speaking in a low voice.

—The Destiny's Mother would be glad to hear that.

At the same time, the firmly locked Immortal Book opened. The book seemed to be engulfed in a windstorm and the letters flashed with light.

-Immortal Book: Chapter 3 <Resurrection>

-You are the warrior selected by Destiny's Mother. The Mother of Destiny has gathered the power of the world and granted you one miracle!

Kwa kwang, kwa kwang, kwa kwang, kwa kwang!

It was at that moment. There was an intense light and four people appeared in the north, south, east and west. There was a magician wearing white robes, a woman wearing silver armour and holding a sword, a middle aged man holding a spear and a priest wearing clergyman robes!

'T-they are....!'

Ark's eyes widened as he saw them. He knew two of them. They were Yggdrasil, the world tree from the Underground World and Yuzuria, the world tree from Seutandal!

'Then the other two people?'

They must be the world trees of the two continents that surfaced before the Demonic World. The Immortal Book had summoned the world trees in each direction.

....These guys!

Lucifer glared as he saw the world trees being summoned. In the past, Lucifer's effort to destroy the world had been undone by the 7 heroes with the help of the world trees. In other words, the existences of the world trees caused great distress to Lucifer! But the red rays just went through the world trees. The world trees were only mentally summoned here. The world trees just ignored Lucifer's reaction.

-I thought everything was over.....

The world trees knew about the situation since their roots were stretched all over the world. But they couldn't do anything even if Lucifer was restored and used the ultimate destruction magic. The presence of the world trees was to maintain the balance of the world.

They weren't allowed to do any acts to change the history of New World. They were prohibited to openly act. But this was the ancient vision that the Creator saw! When Lucifer used the ultimate destruction magic in the past, the world trees were able to help because the 7 heroes were part of the ancient vision. But they lost their power after unleashing it and disappeared somewhere. Therefore the world trees had forgotten about the ancient vision. They appeared here thanks to the guidance of the Immortal Book. Yggdrasil looked at the Immortal Book with fascination.

–Then Ark is the one from the ancient vision that the Immortal Book selected.

That's right. Ark was apparently part of the ancient vision that occurred hundreds of years ago.

–Is this the intention of Destiny's Mother?

The 7 heroes stopped Lucifer hundreds of years ago when he used his ultimate destruction magic. All we could do was reduce the damage to the continent.

–But now.....

–..... The embers of hope haven't gone out yet.

Yuzuria nodded and looked at Yggdrasil, Yeosingwan and Changsha.

–I can't think of any better situation than this one. If we don't use the magic then Lucifer will just destroy the world using the ultimate destruction magic. I'd like to believe in them. If this is the darkness that Destiny's Mother foresaw then we should unseal the book.

–Yes.

Changsha nodded. The world trees opened both hands and the Immortal Book floated upwards and shone intensely. Then a magnificent spell emerged from the mouths of the World Trees.

–In the name of the Great Creator, Destiny's Mother.....

–Using your great authority that created the fate of this world.....

–Please show us your will.....

-Great Revival, Grand Resurrection!

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

A giant waterfall of light poured down from the Immortal Book. Then the bodies of the attack squad turned to charcoal from Lucifer's Apocalypse started changing. White skin appeared, their faces were restored and the body was formed. Ark's skin that was as black as charcoal also returned to its original colour. At the same time, an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-The Immortal Book has used 'The Final Nursing.'

The Creator, Destiny's Mother had an ancient vision and made the Immortal Book. The Immortal Book has its own will. After borrowing the magic of the world trees that maintain the balance of the world, the Immortal Book was able to create one miracle.

In the past, the Immortal Book was able to amplify the Holy Knight Ronian's Shield of Fanaticism in order to block Lucifer's ultimate destruction spell. A few hundred years has passed and the Immortal Book is once again eager to fight Lucifer. It amplified the Creator's 'Nursing' and trigger the ultimate caretaker spell 'Great Revival.'

All allies within 2 kilometres will be restored by Great Revival. The power of the Creator has been borrowed to create a miracle! You are the world's greatest caretaker.

<All allies within 2 kilometres will be restored to 50% health>

* Due to the success of miracle nursing, all stats increase by 10.

* The Affection stat increased by 1,000.

* Fame is increased by 1,000.

*Alignment to good increased by 200.

-You have succeeded in the ultimate Nursing and received the title of 'Divine Caretaker.'

Your fame as a Caretaker has increased, so you will receive praises from many patients.

* As a title bonus, all stats will increase by 10.

*Fame increases by 1,000.

'The ultimate Nursing!'

A miracle had truly happened! The Immortal Book was able to amplify the ability of the owner! Ark's urgent wish was a chance to compete against Lucifer again so the Immortal Book had selected Nursing. The Immortal Book amplified Nursing with the Creator's power and resurrected the attack squad. Thanks to that, all of the attack squad killed by Apocalypse had recovered. Ark also received an additional +20 stat bonus. But the Immortal Book's miracle wasn't over yet.

—The holy relic is needed! Or else the world created by Destiny's Mother will become lost to chaos!

Yeosingwan reached out his hand and shouted. At the same time, a brilliant light appeared in the centre where the attack squad members were gathered.

"Isn't that the Ark of Creation?"

Ark murmured as he looked at the light. Lariette was then pulled by an unseen force to the front of the Ark of Creation. The Ark of Creation automatically opened and a pure white light soared into the sky. It spun fiercely before being drawn into Lariette's body. When the light entwined with Lariette's body, her body became thousands of times larger. However, the image that floated in the black sky was different from Lariette. With black hair like obsidian, crystal clear eyes and skin as white as a snowfield, she was a surprisingly beautiful woman.....no, it was the form of a goddess.

‘That face..... Such a thing!’

Ark belatedly realized something as he looked at the goddess. It was Yuna’s face that Ark saw many times when collecting information from the Idea Maze! So Yuna’s face wasn’t strange to Ark anymore. But he never imagined that he would see that face anywhere else in New World. But she had appeared from the Ark of Creation. The person emerging from the Ark of Creation..... Was Yuna.

‘That’s right. The Creator’s body had emerged from the Ark of Creation. The Immortal Book has talked about Destiny’s Mother many times. Destiny’s Mother was Yuna. That means Yuna created both the Ark of Creation and the Immortal Book.’

After thinking about it, Ark had a doubtful question. Despite suffering from an illness, Yuna had continued working until she died. Therefore Park Woo-seong wanted revenge for Yuna and revived the Dark Lord in order to destroy New World. Then why did Yuna make the Ark of Creation and Immortal Book that were the keys to stopping the Dark Lord? Why? Ark was thinking that when he heard something. The expedition members and demons had seen the scene of the goddess’ huge wings flapping before. But the light which burnt through the darkness didn’t appear this time.

“A warm breeze and a ball of sunshine..... H-how wonderful!”

The attack squad were revived thanks to Nursing but they only regained 50% health. Therefore Roco had sung the songs of recovery as soon as she revived. While Roco was signing, Lariette had used the Ark of Creation and the goddess appeared. And when the light enveloped Lariette.....

“Ah!”

Roco’s singing voice emerged from the mouth of the goddess. It felt like hearing the sounds of elves singing sweetly in mysterious woods. The health and mana of all the allies around Kwarian recovered by a huge

amount. At the same time, an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-The Ark of creation has been triggered!

The power of the Creator who made this world in the beginning is contained inside the Ark of Creation. Because both light and dark were a part of the Creator, this power can be used for light or darkness. If used by a Holy Knight then it can be a blessing or a curse if used by a Ruin Knight.

When a Saint Knight calls upon the inner light (Sanctuary: Saint).
When a Ruin Knight calls upon the darkness (Sanctuary: Devil).

The combination of Immortal Book and Destiny's Mother has created one more miracle. The love of God will rescue the world.

* Saint Knight, Minstrel's cooperative chain skill 'Sanctuary: Holy Hymn' was triggered.

<All allies within 10 kilometres will recover 100% of their health. In addition, courage and morale will increase by 50% for all allies while the demons will have their courage and moral decreased by 50%>

Complete recovery for all soldiers within 10 kilometres!

-Ark, we believe in you.

The world trees became exhausted after using so much magic and gradually faded. The Immortal Book also broke down to single sheets of paper and scattered all over the place. However, the expedition forces already had no interest in the world trees and the Immortal Book.

"Everybody has been restored!"

"Our stamina has recovered!"

"This is evidence that we have God on our side!"

“We need to quickly exterminate the demons and help the attack squad!”

“All airships, recharge the magic gun and the Spear of Thor!”

“Iron armour fleet, open the muzzles of the guns and rush towards the demons!”

The expedition members who saw the complete destruction of the attack squad fought even more desperately after the miracle occurred. Thanks to the boost in courage and morale from Holy Hymn, they poured attacks towards the demon. Ark who was watching the counterattack also regained his vigour.

‘The flow has changed thanks to the Immortal Book!’

-Ugh, these brats..... They revived again?

Lucifer’s eyes finally turned towards them after the world trees disappeared. And the thousands of demons surrounding Lucifer rushed.

“All members make your formations and prepare for the collision!”

Ark withdrew and ordered Thanks to Ark’s miracle, the attack squad had another chance to fight Lucifer. However, the current situation wasn’t enough for him to shout with joy. There were currently 800 troops gathered around Ark. It wouldn’t be easy to deal with Lucifer with those numbers, let alone the thousands of demons. Previously they had been able to ignore the demons and focus on attacking Lucifer thanks to the flying boats. But the miracle hadn’t resurrected the flying boats.

‘We need to deal with the demons and Lucifer.’

If he just looked at this situation then he couldn’t do that much. But Ark believed there was a way.

-Kuwwaaaah!

The demons used their claws and fangs.

“Arrow Storm!”

“My wrath shall be a lightning strike..... Chain Lightning!”

Arrows and magic flew everywhere. And it hit the demons who were jumping towards the attack squad. The demons hit by the attacks unexpectedly flew backwards. Hundreds of warriors flocked from the wreckage of a building and attacked the demons.

“Come!”

Ark grinned as he looked at them. Hundreds of warriors had suddenly appeared from the wreckage of the building. When a user died in New World, their body didn't disappear straight away. These bodies remained in the building wreckage. And everybody was restored thanks to ultimate Nursing. Of course, Ark hadn't expected a complete miracle even if ultimate Nursing was used. Ark was worried that the users wouldn't access the game even if their characters were revived. But despite his worries, the revived attack squad had returned to the battlefield straight away. The reason the warriors were able to return to the battlefield was because they had been watching on TV. All gamers were focused on this battle. The attack squad warriors killed in battle were the same. They had been watching the game exclusive news when they saw ultimate Nursing and entered the game unit straight away.

“Hahahaha, I really did revive!”

“Anyway, I've already died once. Nothing is frightening anymore!”

It wasn't just the effects of being revived. Even without the morale +50% effect of the Ark of Creation, their morale was already incredibly high.

“This is our strategy! Our opponents are thousands of demons and Lucifer. But the demons have formed tight formations around Lucifer so attacking recklessly is suicide. Therefore you will split into units of 10 people to deal with the demons. But this mission isn't to kill the demons! It is important to avoid Lucifer's attack. Always watch for movement and stay as far away from Lucifer as possible!”

“In other words..... Keep running?”

Shambala frowned after hearing Ark’s command. Ark laughed and nodded his head.

“That’s right.”

“What if Lucifer uses that destruction magic again.....”

“He can’t use that magic now.”

Ark laughed at Shambala’s words. That’s right. No matter how much the attack squad avoided Lucifer, it would be impossible if he used Apocalypse. It was a cheat like magic that destroyed all enemies in a 2 kilometre area! If Lucifer used Apocalypse again then the attack squad would be completely wiped out. The Immortal Book had scattered so there were no more miracles. However, Lucifer’s Apocalypse was also a one-time only magic. That’s because Ark knew the conditions to use Apocalypse through Skill Penetration. Lucifer had to pay 50% of his health in exchange for triggering Apocalypse. And Lucifer had already sacrificed 50% of his health. Meanwhile the attack squad had decreased his health by 1~2% before he used the magic so his present health was 49%!

“If he uses Apocalypse in that state then he will die before us.”

“But we won’t be able to win if we keep on running.”

“Who says we’re only running away?”

“Didn’t you say it just now?”

“You’re just running away until I wipe out the demons.”

“What? Wipe out all the demons? You alone? Even if you died and revived, isn’t that too much?”

Shambala looked at him with perplexed eyes.

“Huhuhu, just watch as I use my skills to beat the demons.”

Ark laughed and raised a finger.

“Summon Demon, Curio!”

“Oh! Master, you’re alive?”

Curio asked as he appeared in front of Ark. Ark grabbed Curio’s neck firmly and shouted.

“Let’s get started. Vampire skill, use Entrusted Volumes!”

“Ohhhh! Entrusted Volumes!”

That’s right. This was the special move Ark had prepared before escaping from the labyrinth.

“I have to fight against the Red Man in order to prevent the Dark Lord’s resurrection ceremony. There is no guarantee I can win against the Red Man with my power now. Then I should consider a special knockdown attack.”

The Entrusted Volumes skill surfaced in Ark’s head. It was a technique that gave a lot of bizarre effects impossible to be found elsewhere. Despite that, there were two reasons why Ark didn’t utilize the power of Entrusted Volumes properly. It consumed 500 health and there was no guarantee that he could get the effect he desired. In fact, didn’t the founder of this technique die because he used Entrusted Volumes in a decisive moment?

“But if I use the right timing then Entrusted Volumes could show an enormous effect.”

So Ark had studied ways to trigger the effects of Entrusted Volumes. Since Entrusted Volumes was influenced by properties, alignment and environment, the probability was only 60~70%. Ark had been halfway to giving up when he accidentally found a surprising way to settle the problems with Entrusted Volumes. It was Curio’s ability to absorb skills! That’s right. Curio could absorb a skill when he used Blood-sucking. If Ark triggered the necessary effect from Entrusted Volumes

then Curio could absorb that effect using Blood-sucking. It was why Ark pulled Curio to a corner after defeating Maseutyu. It was to preserve a knockdown effect of Entrusted Volumes. That's why Ark had released Curio's summoning while on the verge of death. If Curio died then the skill he registered would fly away. Now was the time to see the results of that effort. When Curio used the skill, an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-Curio is able to use 'Entrusted Volumes' that is saved in a skill slot.

* Results

【Properties】 : <Mischievous> 【Alignment】 : <Skilful person>
【Environment】 : <Mirror>

The attack method chosen is 'Mimic.'

<The caster can imitate the last attack they received. However, this is just an imitation of the skill so only 80% of its power will be shown>

Curio's 1st stored skill: Entrusted Volumes (Mimic)! Ark had accidentally discovered the Mimic effect during his testing. The Mimic effect was quite strange and fascinating. When Mimic was used, Ark could return the last attack he received at 80% of the power. And the last attack from Lucifer before he died.....

-Lucifer's Divine Skill Apocalypse has been triggered with Mimic!

Apocalypse is the last destruction spell that Lucifer used. The skill was used 5 minutes afterwards.

<A new territory declaration will be used and all demons within the area will be destroyed. Because this is just an imitation, the territory declaration will disappear after it is used. It will consume 50% health and the power decreased to 80% so it will only deal 72,000~80,000 damage>

That's right. It was Lucifer's ultimate destruction magic Apocalypse! When Mimic was used, Ark's body was wrapped in a black aura and Apocalypse invoked. Even if the power was only 80% of the original, all enemies within 2 kilometres would receive 72,000~80,000 damage!

"I never imagined that I could imitate a skill like this."

Ark smiled as the skill was triggered. Saving the Entrusted Volumes (mimic) turned out to be a jackpot! So the reason Ark had the attack squad run around was to reduce the damage to them while the skill was being invoked. It was an attack that would deal 72,000~80,000 damage in one blow! When the skill was used, all the demons would have an instant death like the attack squad previously. Then there was no reason to fight.

-Unbelievable! How do you.....?

Lucifer exclaimed as he saw Ark use the skill.

"Why? Do you have a copyright over this skill?"

-You.... Kill him!

Thousands of demons ran towards Ark at Lucifer's command. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members stood in front of him and shouted.

"Stop those guys!"

"Protect Ark by every means possible!"

If Ark received a critical hit then the skill would be cancelled. While Ark used Sprint to run away, JusticeMan and the attack squad blocked the demons. But Lucifer blocked Ark's way after a long game of tag. The moment he was about to bring a fist down, Ark smiled and muttered.

"Too late."

Ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku!

At the same time, there was a deafening roar and the dark sky split. The three devils Anger, Fear and Despair were descending.

-Kuooh, you morons! It wasn't me..... Go back!

Lucifer raised his head and screamed at the three devils. However, the three devils weren't listening to Lucifer anymore. They ignored Lucifer and their eyes flashed. Once again, thousands of red rays shot outwards in different directions. The rays also ignored the Rwigenberg's shield and pierced through. But their targets weren't the expedition members but the demons and Lucifer.

-Kuwwaaaaaaaaah!

The demons turned pale with fear and ran around all over the place. But it was already impossible to escape from the ultimate destruction spell.

Kwang, kwang, kwang, kwang, kwang!

Thousands of red rays fell vertically from the sky! The demons turned to charcoal and fell to the ground.

-Your level has risen.

-Your level has risen.

-Your level has risen.....

After the demons were killed with one blow, the message windows floated in front of them. But the experience was shared between the attack squad members. However, not everyone received the same amount of experience. The one who dealt the largest blow to the enemy would receive the most experience. Moreover, Ark was also the commander. He received bonus experience and fame every time he killed an enemy. Therefore Ark jumped up 7 levels to 504. But when Ark broke through level 500, an unimaginable change to his body took place. His arms started tingling and the last tattoo was unsealed. Then an information window flashed in front of him.

-A seal of 'Eternal Soul' has been released and you've acquired a new

profession-specific skill.

【Demonic Response】 : Eternal Soul stage 9 (Passive)

‘Demonic Response’ is a necessary stage to learn if they want to reach the enlightenment needed for Eternal Soul. When fighting against a monster with the demonic attribute, you will deal additional 50% damage to the demons and gain +60% resistance to the demonic attribute. In addition, you will be able to detect hidden demonic power within the bodies of monsters.

<When sensing a demonic attribute, you will deal +50% damage against demonic monsters and gain +60% resistance to the demonic attribute>

【Hero Fusion】 : Eternal Soul stage 10 (Active)

The Dark Lord returned to hell after being defeated by the 7 heroes but Hero Maban knew that he would return to the world after hundreds of years. Unlike the other heroes, Hero Maban stayed in Oberium and devoted his life to finding a way to defeat the forces of darkness. After many years of meditation, he realized that if the power of heroes with different attributes were gathered in one person then the forces of darkness could be defeated.

After a lot of researching, Hero Maban came up with Hero Fusion. Hero Fusion is a technique which draws the power of Area Declaration into one body. You can even absorb the power of the heroes’ descendants’ Area Declaration. The absorption of the Area Declaration into your body will give you superhuman ability. But Hero Fusion is impossible for someone who hasn’t raised their abilities sufficiently to endure. Therefore it can only be learnt once level 500 is reached.

<The Area Declarations of the heroes’ descendants are absorbed>

“The last Eternal Soul!”

Ark’s eyes shone as he checked the information window. Finally all the seals of Eternal Soul have been released. However, Ark didn’t change to his 3rd profession despite all the seals being released. It was clear that

Eternal Soul was his 3rd stage profession but some conditions must still be lacking.

‘Anyway, now I have 50% additional damage against demons! If Shining Darkness is added then that is 70%! That alone is worth Eternal Soul being unsealed! Now all the demons have disappeared so only the Dark Lord Lucifer is left!’

Ark’s eyes flashed as he looked at Lucifer. Lucifer had failed to avoid Apocalypse. Furthermore, Apocalypse ignored all defences and shields! Therefore Lucifer’s dark armour couldn’t stop the flames from Apocalypse.

-Kuaaaah! T-these guys.....!

Lucifer who had attempted to attack Ark was wrapped in flames and retreated with a shriek. He lost 10% of his health at the same time. Ark’s mouth gaped open.

‘Apocalypse did 72,000~80,000 damage but he only lost 10%? Doesn’t that mean he has a minimum health of 720,000~800,000? It has decreased by 60% so he still has around 320,000 left!’

While Ark hadn’t expected Lucifer to die, he at least expected him to be in a critical condition. But despite being hit by Fear, Anger and Despair, his health had only decrease by 10% and he still has 320,000 left.

....320,000 health?

The number was enough to make someone lose their spirits.

‘Even if all the demons are killed, the odds aren’t in our favour with only 1,200 members of the attack squad. The attack squad attacked using the flying boats for 1 hour and his health only decreased by 1~2%.....

If he wanted to reduce Lucifer’s health by 40% then wouldn’t it take 30~40 hours? No matter how high morale was, that much was physically impossible. Of course, the situation could change if the airships and armoured fleet lent their power.

‘But the Apocalypse that I used only killed the demons around Rwigenberg.’ Kwarian was still infested with thousands of demons.

Of course, the expedition forces had their moral increased thanks to Holy Hymn so they were overwhelming the demons. But it was impossible to wipe out the demons and penetrate the defense shield in a short amount of time.

‘Damn, how can I kill this Dark Lord.....? ?’

After confirming Lucifer’s health, Ark felt his morale gradually decrease. At that moment, Ark looked at Lucifer and saw a strange scene. When Lucifer was engulfed by the flames, his dark armour protected him a little bit but it soon melted like scales. When that happened, Lucifer’s real skin swarming with maggots was revealed. Although the attack squad members screamed at the disgusting appearance, Ark was different. Ark showed interest as he looked at the unsightly body.

“What, what the? This is?”

Ark looked at the chest portion that was revealed when the dark armour melted. He had discovered something.

‘Perhaps..... Did I really see it for sure? Wait? Lucifer also didn’t appear until later. Why didn’t I think of that? It is strange that he hasn’t been seen since Lucifer was restored. Then he was in there all along? In that case....’

Ark had the idea and looked at the blinking warning message on the top right.

-Somewhere in the darkness of the world, the Dark Lord’s resurrection ceremony has begun!

<Time remaining until the Dark Lord’s resurrection: 48 minutes>

‘There’s no doubt. That explains it. Then.....!’

Ark organized his thoughts before opening his eyes. He ran towards Lucifer and yelled.

“Shambhala, Bread, come with me! Lariette, Wormer, Redian and Timosi, please support us! JusticeMan ajusshi, concentrate all the troops in the front!”

“What? Gathering all the troops in one place.....”

They were a chance they would be wiped out by Lucifer’s wide area attacks. But Ark just shook his head and shouted.

“I don’t have time to explain in detail. This is our chance while he is still confused by the flames.”

“...Understood. All troops gather in front of Lucifer!”

The attack squad cried out and flocked in front of Lucifer. Meanwhile, Ark who had joined the other heroes’ descendants arrived in front of Lucifer first and shouted.

“Curio, Entrusted Volumes (Excellent Luck) fire!”

“Oohhhhh!”

A vending machine appeared in front of Curio and the skill was exercised.

-Curio has used the power of Entrusted Volumes.

* Results

【Properties】 <Good Luck> 【Alignment】 :<Aristocrat> 【Environment】 :<King’s Hall>

The effect that has been selected is ‘Excellent Luck.’

<All allies within 100 metres will have their luck increased by 200% for 10 minutes. When luck increases, the probability of a critical hit or a special attack will increase>

Curio's 2nd saved vampire skill Entrusted Volumes (Excellent Luck) was used! The effect increased the luck of all surrounding allies by 200%! It might not seem like much but it surprisingly had a good effect once used. Luck was usually a stat that users didn't raise. However, the stat had a large influence since it increased the chances of a critical hit. Of course, raising luck didn't have any obvious effect so most players would rather raise intelligence or agility. However, the strongest buff from intelligence or agility only raised luck by 50% while Entrusted Volumes (Excellent Luck) increased it by 200%. That was enough to greatly increase the chances of critical hits by the attack squad members. But that wasn't the only reason why Ark used 'Excellent Luck.'

"All troops attack Lucifer's chest in harmony! Dark Strike!"

Ark and the 1,200 soldiers he commanded fired their skills towards Lucifer's chest. There were huge flashes, flames and explosions as the dark armour on Lucifer's chest gradually faded away. The attack damage was overwhelming the recovery rate of the dark armour.

'It is possible to peel off his armour like this. Before it was harder to concentrate the attacks on Lucifer's chest while avoiding damage using the flying boats.'

Then Ark looked towards the heroes' descendants and yelled.

"Shambala, Bread, Redian, Lariette, Timosi and Wormer, don't attack randomly and fire the skill with the exact timing. One, two, three. Dark Blade!"

"Earth storm!"

"Torpedo Sword!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

When the heroes' descendants used precise timing to use their skills, there was a massive ringing sound. And after those attacks succeeding many times.....

Suddenly there was a violent lightning and an information window popped up.

-A new group cooperation has been registered.

Cooperation: When your profession-specific skill aligns by 70% with your allies, there is an opportunity to learn a cooperative attack. Presently Ark-nim, Lariette-nim, Shambala-nim, Bread-nim, Redian-nim, Timosi-nim and Wormer-nim's cooperation has reached 73%. In addition, the profession-specific skills have met the criteria and a new group cooperation has been registered.

However, the chances of activating the cooperative skill is 5% and if even 1 of the 7 people fail within the time limit then it will be cancelled.

* Currently available group cooperation

-Ragnarok

Dark Blade (Properties: Darkness) = Torpedo Sword (Properties: Lightning) = Grand Cross (Properties= Holy) = Earth Storm (Properties: Beast) = Volcano of Hell (Properties: Fire) = Devil Penetrating Arrow (Property: Exorcism) = Throwing Equipment (Properties: Machine)

<Cooperation success: A chance to trigger +1,000% additional damage to each skill>

"Yes, it was successful!"

Ark cried with joy as he saw the information window. That's right. This was why Ark had used Entrusted Volumes (Excellent Luck). Even if their cooperation was more than 70%, there was only a 5% chance to trigger the special move. It wasn't possible to use in battle unless they had tremendous luck and timing. But it all depended on luck. If all of their lucks increased by 200% then it was possible to use the cooperative skill.

"Dark Blade!"

Ark used his sword to attack the black armour. Then Ark's attack disappeared and a huge sword appeared in the sky. Shambala and Lariette had already used cooperation with him once so they skillfully connected their attacks and sparks appeared around the sword and formed a cross.

"Haaayaahh, Earth Storm!"

"..... Destroy the enemy, Volcano of Hell!"

"Matanyi Shooter no. 1, Devil Penetrating Arrow!"

"Take this, 1 gold wrench!"

The rest proved that they were heroes' descendants and also connected their skills. When six people united their skills, a huge cross sword surrounded by a storm of fire was hanging in the air. Finally Wormer threw a wrench and an enormous mechanical soldier appeared, grabbing the sword and thrusting it towards Lucifer's chest.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The cross sword was driven into Lucifer's chest and a deafening roar occurred. Each skill gave an extra x1,000% damage! Lucifer's chest received enormous damage and his health was decreased by 1%. 1%..... When considering the visual effects, the result was bitter. That was equivalent to the combination of the attack squad's desperate attacks at the beginning. However, Ark hadn't used the cooperation skill in order to damage Lucifer.

"That guy's chest has opened!"

The dark armour in that location had disappeared and Ark stared at his chest. The maggots around Lucifer's chest..... The Red Man was surprisingly located in a clear capsule lodged in the chest. That's right. Ark had noticed the Red Man after the flames from Apocalypse melted the dark armour. In fact, Lucifer's presence was so strong that Ark had forgotten about the Red Man. Then he saw the Red Man lodged in Lucifer's chest and a question popped into his head.

‘The Red Man isn’t lodged in there for no reason. If that’s the case then why?’

He recalled the past and received a clue to answer that question. When Ark saw Lucifer for the first time, the warning message stated that there was still approximately 2 hours left until Lucifer was resurrected. Despite that, Lucifer had appeared in front of the attack squad members. How on earth? That was the question in the back of his mind while fighting Lucifer. But he immediately came up with an answer after seeing the Red Man in Lucifer’s chest.

‘What if Lucifer’s resurrection ceremony is still in progress? Then the reason why Lucifer is moving..... Maybe the Red Man is moving Lucifer’s body while the resurrection ceremony is progressing?’

This was the hypothesis Ark came up with. Of course, this was still only Ark’s guess. But it was a fact that the Red Man was lodged in Lucifer’s chest. Then he must be there for some important purpose. And that purpose wouldn’t be good for Ark.

‘If I open the chest then everything will become clear!’

Thus Ark concentrated the attacks on Lucifer’s chest. The shield was gone and the Red Man was exposed. There was only one thing left to do!

“Summon Demon, Burning Soul, transform into Pendragon!”

Kurarara, kurarara!

At that time, the space warped and Burning Soul appeared before transforming into a burning dragon. Ark got on Burning Soul and flew towards Lucifer’s chest. The dark armour was gone but Lucifer swung both arms as Ark closed in. Ark just made Burning Soul rise vertically and exclaimed.

“Jump, Dark Blade, Adol!”

It was the chain attack of Jump and Dark Blade!

Ark flew like an arrow and drove his sword into Lucifer's chest. Ark's sword dug around at the flesh tangled around the Red Man's capsule. Ark grasped the capsule while tearing at the flesh surrounding it. But the opponent was Lucifer. The skin was strong like rubber and he couldn't cut it properly.

"Ugh, damn.....!"

"Ark, his shield is closing! Heavy Sword!"

Then he heard Shambala's yell. He turned around and saw that the dark armour was recovering. Ark was clinging to the chest so the attack squad members were too afraid to attack. If he was trapped in the dark armour while defenseless then he would be destroyed in a few seconds!

"But there is no other way!"

Lucifer had already escaped from his confusion. He also knew that Ark was aiming for the chest so he wouldn't get this chance again. And if Ark was fighting an incomplete Lucifer..... It was difficult to believe but Lucifer wasn't complete.

'He will only become complete when the resurrection ceremony finishes. In other words, Lucifer will become much stronger after 40 minutes.'

Ark used his sword even more frantically.

"Now it is either attack or die....."

However, Ark soon became covered by the dark armour. Screams emerged from all over the place as Ark was covered with the dark armour.

"Ah, Ark-nim!"

"Ark oppa!"

"Leader-nim!"

“T-this, attack! Concentrate all your firepower before that shield thickens!”

JusticeMan stared dumbly before shouting. The attack squad members were desperately trying to attack when Lucifer’s chest suddenly shook. A lump formed and Ark’s voice could be heard.

“.....Shining Darkness!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

He had sealed up the demons in his sword while fighting. How strong would Shining Darkness be when charged with 60 demons? At the same time, the dark armour exploded open and the capsule popped out.

“Ugh!”

Ark who received considerable damage while being trapped in the dark armour also fell out. At the same time, the capsule fell beside Lucifer’s foot and shattered. The Red Man staggered out of the wreckage of the capsule. He glared at Ark with deep red eyes and angrily proclaimed.

“.....Ark!”

Act 8: Project: Lucifer

-Kuwwaaaah!

Once the capsule was gone, Lucifer yanked at his head and went mad. He shrieked and swung his arms like an insane person.

“Huck! S-scatter!”

The attack squad members gathered in front of Lucifer scattered like chickens. But Lucifer didn’t even look at them. Lucifer just pounded his head against the ground. Then he suddenly stopped and his whole body melted down to a jelly like texture.

"M-melted? So he is dead?"

"What? Is it over?"

"We won?"

The attack squad murmured as they started at Lucifer who had changed to a huge slime. Ark quickly confirmed the warning message and shook his head.

"No, it's not over yet!"

-Somewhere in the darkness of the world, the Dark Lord's resurrection ceremony has begun!

<Time remaining until the Dark Lord's resurrection: 37 minutes>

Ark cried out and the black slime started to wiggle. Then dozens of tentacles started exploding all over the place.

Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa, ku kwa kwa kwa kwa!

"Huk! What, what the?"

"H-help me, waaaaahhhhh!"

Dozens of soldiers watching with dumb surprise were grabbed by the tentacles and absorbed into Lucifer. Only bones were left of the soldiers absorbed by Lucifer.

'Oh my god, Lucifer can still attack even while the resurrection ceremony is ongoing?'

Ark once again realized Lucifer's power. In fact, Ark thought that Lucifer would be like a doll with its battery removed after the Red Man was gone. However, Lucifer was still a threat without the Red Man.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Lucifer swung his hundreds of tentacles wildly and dust covered the area. The attack squad could only see 10 metres in front of them thanks to the dust so they became even more confused. And the resurrection hadn't stopped. In the end, they needed to shatter Lucifer in 37 minutes.

"But that guy's movement is clearly different. Previously he was consciously moving but now he is just attacking wildly. Plus....."

"Sheesh, that monster bastard. Torrential Sword!"

"Why won't you disappear? Earth storm!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Then Shambala and Bread damaged the tentacles near them. There was an explosion and several tentacles fell down feebly to the ground. At the same time, Lucifer's health was quickly reduced by 0.5%.

"That guy has degenerated while holding the resurrection ceremony so his defense has fallen and his shield is gone. If Lucifer is in this state then the attack squad can kill him in the time limit!"

If Lucifer was in such a state when the attack squad escaped from the Idea Maze then everything would've ended already. The Red Man's trick cost them quite a bit of time. However, now the Red Man's trick had been revealed. The remaining time was 37 minutes. It wasn't a large amount of time but all the demons had been wiped out and the 1,200 attack squad members revived.

"JusticeMan ajusshi, rehabilitation hyungnims, calm down. Lucifer was previously strong but now he is just an amoeba. If you look at the attack pattern then it will be easy to avoid. Furthermore, there is no shield and the defense is at the standard of a general boss. If you handle it calmly then he isn't a difficult opponent."

"I noticed it too!"

JusticeMan nodded. The rehabilitation members read Lucifer's attack patterns and shouted.

“Everybody split into units consisting of 50 people. Archers and magicians will attack the main body while the warriors will protect them from the tentacles! We will deliver the position of the troops in real time!”

The attack squad had experienced many battles and fought closely together. After hearing the orders from JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members, they instantly made their formations. Once they each took a position, dealing with the tentacles wasn't that difficult.

“That's it. If we push him like this.....!”

Flash!

Ark was just sighing with relief when it happened. A red light flashed in front of him and he felt a huge impact to his side. Ark fell to the ground and his limbs wouldn't move when he tried to stand up.

-You have been hit by a 'Chakra Wave.'

<You have received the direct impact of 'Chakra Wave' inside your body. Defense is ignored and you have received 800 damage. The shock wave also ruined the balance of mana inside your body and you have lost 1000 mana. Thanks to the severe bruising, your attack speed and movement speed is reduced by 10% for 5 minutes. Your body is also rigid and you will be unable to move for 3 seconds>

“Ugh, Chakra wave?”

Ark flinched and lifted his eyes. One man slowly walked through the dust caused by Lucifer. It was a man with red hair wearing a white mask! Ark's eyes shook anxiously as he saw him.

“The Red Man!”

“You..... I'm going to kill you!”

The Red Man murmured with a harsh voice.

‘Dammit, wasn't I too careless because of Lucifer?’

He was stunned by his forgetfulness. The Red Man pulled out two swords from his waist and attacked. It was great speed that transcended imagination and made him almost invisible! If he thought about what he experienced with the Red Man before then it would certainly be a critical hit. However, Ark was paralyzed by the previous Chakra Wave and he couldn't move. Ark prepared for the impact. And just as the Red Man's sword was about to reach Ark's neck!

"Do you not see us at all? Earth storm!"

"Torrential Sword!"

Shambala and Bread jumped through the dust towards the Red Man. The Red Man bent his body like a snake and moved to the left and right. There was the sound of something breaking and Bread and Shambala flew back while spouting blood.

"Ugh! W-what is this? I didn't see him move."

"That bastard.... What have you done to my pet?"

Redian belatedly appeared and frowned while raising both hands. She made an X with both arms and shouted.

"Fusion magic, Elemental Break!"

Fire and ice were drawn from side to side in an arc and hit the Red Man! Before the spell could hit, the Red Man disappeared and unexpectedly showed up in front of Redian. At the same time, the Red Man's fist hit Redian's stomach.

"Disappear woman!"

Redian screamed as she flew back 10 metres and hit the ground. Timosi hid in the dust and used that chance to fire dozens of arrows. No, she tried to bombard him.

"Red Man, this is revenge for Alan! Matanyi Shooter no. 4, Devil's....."

The Red Man rapidly rotated his body, causing dozens of red rays to shoot out from his mantle. The dozens of red rays pierced Timosi's body. Timosi gushed blood from her whole body and fell down.

"Waaahhhhhhhh!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

At that time, Wormer in his armoured suit rushed fiercely forward and fired blindly. But in just a moment, black smoke rose from the armoured suit and the shoulder parts exploded. The armoured suit couldn't control its speed anymore and just rotated around wildly. The Red Man already knew Wormer was approaching while he was attacking Timosi. No, he couldn't see through the dust but Lariette still screamed and collapsed despite being far away. It was a reaction speed that transcended imagination.

"Trash like this....."

The Red Man murmured in a distorted voice after handling the heroes' descendants.

"My mistake. I considered you guys boring so I didn't pay attention..... I should've handled you immediately. But I will correct that mistake. Once I handle you guys then Lucifer's resurrection will be complete without any problems."

"Do you think we will just let you?"

Ark's paralysis was finally released and he stood up. He boldly retorted towards the Red Man but he was actually sweating.

'Damn, I thought we would've lasted longer.....'

Ark stared at the fallen Bread and Shambala. Ark had been level 300 when he first encountered the Red Man. At the time, Ark and Shambala tried a pincer attack but they were still smashed. However, it had been almost 1 year since then. Ark was level 500 and he gained equipment that couldn't even be compared to back then. Therefore he had

confidence that he could at least fight against the Red Man. Once he met the Red Man again, he realized how big an illusion that was. Of course, Ark had received a surprise blow. However, Shambala and Bread were almost equal to Ark and they surprised the Red Man first. Yet they couldn't even attack properly before being forced to the ground. It was the same for Redian, Timosi, Wormer and Lariette afterwards. It only took him 3~4 seconds to deal with them! It was an unbelievable strength. But it was understandable if Park Woo-seong was behind the Red Man.

'Park Woo-seong is the main creator of New World!'

Naturally Park Woo-seong tested many parts of the game while creating it. And what if he didn't erase one character but left it?

'The Red Man..... He is the first person created in New World!'

In that case, perhaps the Red Man's level was already in the hundreds when New World was commercialized. Obviously he would know everything about New World, gained various abilities as well as equipment.

'But his strength isn't just his levels and skills.'

Ark found out a while ago that the Red Man was just an auto program who was close to an NPC. But even if he was an NPC, he was different from an ordinary NPC. Most NPCs only had a few gigabytes of data behind it while the Red Man had hundreds or thousands of gigabytes of data. Therefore the Red Man's calculation speed easily surpassed any human brain and he could react to any attacks. It was like they were battling a super computer. The character was invincible! It was natural. Park Woo-seong intended to make his creation invincible.

'The Red Man's stats, equipment and skills surpasses all of ours in every way. How can we defeat such a monster?'

Ark's thoughts frantically rolled over in his head.

"I'll dispose of all of you at once. Shiva's Proclamation!"

The Red Man shouted and punched the ground with his fist.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

A huge stone statue rose up from the ground. It was one of the three Hindu gods. It was a stone statue resembling Shiva with four arms, three eyes and a snake wrapped around the neck. The four arms made of stone moved strangely and the surrounding space became filled with a red light. Ark's face instantly darkened at the sight. Ark had already experienced the power of this once before. Shiva's Proclamation was a fraudulent new territory declaration where the abilities of the Red Man, his movement speed and defense increased by 50% when within the 300 metre area. Ark remembered the Red Man using the Divine Skill Indra's Lightning to wipe them all out in Seutandal. The invincible man became even stronger.

'I made a mistake. I can't even use Area Declaration now that he used new territory declaration.'

Ark looked at the Red Man with a hopeless expression. At the moment, the skill he gained when the last seal of Eternal Soul was released popped into his head. It was Hero Fusion which absorbed all the Area Declarations into his body! Even if he could use Glory of the Night, he wouldn't be able to deal with the Red Man who used the divine proclamation. However, Hero Fusion meant he was able to absorb the Area Declarations of the other heroes' descendants.

'We've already used Area Declaration but we died and revived so the cool down time is reset. Then it is possible to make all the heroes' descendants proclaim their Area Declarations! I can beat the Red Man!'

".....Die!"

While Ark was thinking, the Red Man ran up while wielding his sword.

Kiiiiing!

The Red Man's sword pushed past the sound barrier.... Ark rolled to the ground and shouted.

“Eternal Soul, Hero Fusion! Area Declaration, Glory of the Night!”

At the same time, an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-Glory of the Night has been used.

Due to the effect of Hero Fusion from Eternal Soul, Glory of the Night has been absorbed into your body.

<Your attack and defense has increased by 50% and magic resistance has increased by 20%>

Ark got up at the same time and yelled.

“Now. Shambala, Bread, Redian, Lariette, Wormer and Timosi, use your Area Declarations!”

“What? But the Red Man has already proclaimed the new territory declaration.....”

“There’s no time to explain. I have a way to take care of that! I need you to use your Area Declarations!”

“Ah, I don’t know. It isn’t possible for me to even move in this state. Area Declaration, Infinite Energy Field!”

Wormer exclaimed from within the broken armoured suit. Instead of Area Declaration being used, a small ball seemed to form in the air in front of Wormer. And it flew towards Ark where it was absorbed into his body. At the same time, the Red Man jumped across the space and brandished his sword. Just before the Red Man’s sword touched him, Wormer’s Area Declaration was absorbed and Ark was covered with shiny gold armour. It was the additional effect of Wormer’s Area Declaration, Infinite Energy Field!

Kyakyakyakyak!

The Red Man’s sword scratched the gold iron and sparked. The Red Man frowned and retreated one step because of the unexpected situation.

The rest of the heroes' descendants realized the situation and activated Area Declaration.

"Area Declaration, River of Blood!"

"Area Declaration, Land of the Beast!"

"Area Declaration, Land of Purification!"

"Area Declaration, Exorcist!"

"Area Declaration, Land of Fire and Ice!"

The 5 Area Declarations turned into small balls and shot towards Ark. A fiercely spinning vortex appeared around Ark as the balls were absorbed into his body. There was a massive shockwave and the heroes' descendants burst out with confusion

"What the? What happened to him?"

The dust gradually subsided and Ark's form could be seen. But he wasn't the previous Ark anymore. The Area Declarations from the 7 heroes had fused into Ark's body!

"This is Hero Maban's final technique, Hero Fusion...."

Ark murmured as his body was enveloped in light. Ark had changed after absorbing the Area Declarations. He was always wearing leather armour but this was the first time he saw his arms and legs so muscular. And two transparent crystal shields rotated around his body which had a gold shine to it. But the more amazing thing wasn't the change to his appearance but the tremendous power he could feel. At the same time, an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-Hero Fusion has absorbed all the heroes' Area Declaration into your body.

* Attack and defense power increased by 300%.

- * Resistance to cold has risen by 200%.
- * Movement Speed, Reaction Rate and Attack Speed increased by 200%.
- * The amount of mana needed to use the skills has decreased by half.
- * Resistance to magic and curses has increased by 100%.
- * The crystal shields have a 30% chance of reflecting enemy attacks.
- * The iron armour increases defense by 100%.

“Oh my god, is this really the effect of a normal skill?”

Ark gaped as he saw the information window. While Ark was gaping, the Red Man crossed the space again.

“Even if all the trash is gathered, it is still trash!”

The revolving crystal shields stopped the Red Man’s attack. At the same time, the sword that grazed the surface of the crystal shield bounced back and grazed the Red Man’s shoulder.

“Ugh! T-this is.....”

The Red Man withdrew and stared with confusion at his sword. Then Ark looked at the Red Man and laughed.

“A collection of trash is still trash? Is it really like that?”

Ark gathered strength into his ankle and kicked lightly at the ground. Ark’s body disappeared and he showed up right in front of the Red Man’s nose. He didn’t use any special skills. The 200% increase in movement speed made it seem like he had leapt across the space.

“Now it is time for your punishment.”

Kkiiiing!

Ark laughed as he appeared under the Red Man's nose and swung his sword. Ark's sword also broke through the sound barrier.

"T-this bastard.....!"

The Red Man quickly withdrew. Ark pursued the Red Man with his eyes. This was because relative speed was applied to New World. If his movement speed was faster than his opponent's reaction rate, even if it was only by a little bit, relative speed would be applied through a complex system to prevent the opponent's movement. That was the secret of the spatial movement the Red Man used! But now Ark's reaction rate had increased by 200%.

"Is that all?"

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Ark caught the movement of the Red Man and hurled complicated rapid-fire attacks.

"Is that really Ark fighting over there?"

Bread muttered with a foolish expression. Frankly, Ark didn't feel like his speed had increased by 200%. It just felt like he was moving faster than usual. However, Shambala and Bread fell into the trap of the system's relative speed and couldn't see Ark's complicated movements as he chased the Red Man. It just seemed like flashes of light and dust flying in empty spaces. Thus they couldn't grasp how the battle was progressing. They couldn't even intrude. After 10 minutes of the intense but boring invisible battle.....

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

There was a violent shaking. At the same time, dust spread while Ark and the Red Man appeared. There was a distance of 10 metres between them while their appearances were almost equal. Several of Ark's metal armour plates had been shed while the Red Man was holding his side. The Red Man grinded his teeth and muttered.

“Ugh, you dare go against the creator.....”

Ark snorted and said.

“Don’t talk nonsense. You’re an auto program! Don’t you know that is illegal? Your life itself is illegal!”

“What, auto? What is an auto program?”

The Red Man looked baffled.

‘Eh? What the, what’s with this reaction? Does this guy not know that he is an auto program?’

“You.....”

Ark looked at him with an absurd expression and tried to talk while the Red Man shook his head violently and shouted.

“Shut up! I am the creator. It is my choice whether to destroy the world or not!”

“You’re an illegal software so shouldn’t you be able to press the ‘Del’ key?”

“Shut up! Divine skill, Indra’s Lightning!”

Pajijik, pajijik, pajijik, flash!

At the moment, four round discs appeared around the Red Man and shot out sparks. Sparks rose from the disks engraved with Indra! The sparks formed a huge lightning bolt and headed towards Ark. Just like in the myths, Indra exterminated all his enemies with lightning when he became angry. He was enveloped in a huge flash as the lightning hit him.

“Ah, Ark!”

Shambala and Bread simultaneously cried out. When he was hit with the Divine Skill before, he had become paralyzed and his health reached the

bottom. If Ark couldn't avoid the lightning then he would be turned to ash! The heroes' descendants imagined Ark as ash and moaned.

"Ha, your repertoire hasn't changed. Don't you have anything else? You've learnt that skill a long time ago and it seems like you haven't increased your repertoire at all. I'll show you my new repertoire. Divine Skill, Descent of the Fire Draconian!"

Ark's voice was heard and a pillar of flames shot up from among the sparks.

-You have used the Divine Skill Descent of the Fire Draconian!

The <Immortal Fire Draconian> effect will be applied for 10 minutes.

* 300 Fire damage added to all attacks.

* Attack speed, Movement speed and Reaction rate will increase by 50%.

* All enemies that attack will receive 10~100 fire damage.

* Fire resistance increases to 500% and all party members' fire resistance will increase to 100%.

* When activated, all enemies within the area will receive 1000 fire damage while 50% of the user's health will be restored.

"Huck! H-how did you block Indra's.....?"

"Your Master might've created New World but you are just his body you idiot!"

Ark smiled and penetrated the Red Man with his sword.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Huge flames exploded from Ark's body and sucked out the Red Man's health. The fire hit everywhere as the Red Man ended up kneeling on one side. Then he looked at Ark with disbelieving eyes. He finally noticed how Ark had stopped Indra's Lightning.

“U-unbelievable!”

Ark was standing in one spot with many swords surrounding him. That’s right. Ark had experienced Indra’s Lightning before and came out with a way to defend against it. It was placing swords all over the place! Those swords acted like a lightning rod and absorbed the attacks from Indra’s Lightning.

“You’re a computer program so you might have stronger combat abilities than users but you don’t know how to use the game. Huhuhu, a person with wisdom is indeed better than someone with knowledge. Isn’t that right?”

Ark murmured. The battle between Ark and the Red Man was equal so the ‘game mechanics application’ meant the difference between victory or defeat.

-Kuoong!

At the same time, Lucifer deflated like a balloon after receiving the concentrated hits of JusticeMan, the rehabilitation members and the attack squad. Both the Red Man and Lucifer had been defeated.

“Now, let’s finish this.”

Ark muttered with a relaxed expression. Despair rose in the Red Man’s eyes after seeing what happened to Lucifer. Then something suddenly bubbled from Lucifer’s body and shrank. The sight of it caused the Red Man’s eyes to flash. He suddenly got up and ran towards Lucifer.

“Eh! T-this bastard...!”

Ark overtook him and swung his sword. However, the Red Man agilely squeezed between Lariette and Roco. Meanwhile, the attack squad were embracing each other with joy as one of them prepared to drive his sword into Lucifer’s body.

“You bastard! Why can’t you just give up?”

Ark caught up to the Red Man again and attacked. No, he was about to attack.

“Kuwaaaaaaaah!”

The Red Man suddenly screamed and his white mask exploded. Ark retreated after seeing the Red Man’s face and stuttered.

“What, what the? His face?”

0100010101000010101111011010101001011110.....

The Red Man was faceless. It was just a void filled with numbers. But the surprising thing happened afterwards. The world froze the moment the Red Man’s mask exploded. The explosion, dust and all the people moving suddenly froze. The only thing that moved was the numbers forming the Red Man’s face.

‘What, what the? Why can’t my body move?’

Ark used all his strength to try and move his body. Lucifer who had deflated like a balloon began to gradually rise. The thousands of tentacles on the ground also attached back onto him. Then Lucifer’s low health started climbing?’

“T-this is back server?”

Back server..... It was the phenomenon where the system returned to a previous state because of an error! It was a phenomenon that occurred in the 2000’s when online gaming was still unsafe. But the phenomenon in front of him wasn’t a simple back server. The only thing returning to its original form was Lucifer. If this continued then Lucifer would change back to the original state that they encountered him in..... And it was a long battle so Ark and the attack squad’s stamina and skills were already depleted.

‘T-this isn’t possible!’

The stiffened Ark silently screamed.

“I’ve found it!”

A pair of eyes sparkled in the darkness. The person looking at the laptop was a man in his late 30’s.

“I never thought it would be in a place like that. Global Exos, you shallow guys....! I’ve finally found it. If this comes into my hands then nobody can stop me now. Lucifer will revive and New World will disappear!”

The man typed on the laptop keyboard at an absurd speed. Then a message appeared on the screen.

-Do you want to start the Master code ‘Project: Lucifer’? Yes/No

“Now disappear. You ugly group of data!”

The man’s cold eyes danced with joy as he prepared to hit the Y key. All of a sudden he heard shouting from behind him.

“Stop!”

The man flinched and hurriedly turned his head. At the same time, 10 people appeared after climbing a mountain slope. They were blond south east Asian foreigners wearing a badge on their chest. The initials G.A.S.P were engraved on the badge. G.A.S.P..... They were the special security agents from Global Exos. Confusion spread over the man’s face as he saw their badges.

“H-how did you get here?”

“New World told us.”

A man in his thirties wearing a suit went in front of the SP and replied. He showed the screen of a MP (Movie Player) and continued talking.

"I've been looking for you over the past 2 years. But I never thought you would be in a place like this. Then we saw a video that a user in New World shot a while ago."

The video of the grave that Ark saw in the Idea Maze was shown on the MP screen. The grave was the one the man was sitting next to. The man in the suit sighed as he saw the MP.

"This is where you were..... Yuna's grave, Park Woo-seong ssi."

"Ha Myung-woo....."

That's right. The man wearing a suit was Ha Myung-woo from Global Exos. The man holding the laptop was the one who went missing a few years ago, Park Woo-seong. Park Woo-seong looked at Ha Myung-woo and smiled coldly.

"You dug through the videos and finally found me."

"I remembered the moment I saw the grave. This is Yuna's hometown. You disappeared and took Yuna's body from the hospital. After watching the video from the Idea Maze, I realized that you must've made her grave before New World was commercialized. You love her more than your life so I thought that you definitely wouldn't leave her grave."

"You really are resourceful, just like the rumours say."

Park Woo-seong laughed. But it was a hollow laugh as his eyes became sharp.

"However, it is too late. The situation is already over."

"I know. I already guessed it after seeing the current situation in New World through the MP."

Ha Myung-woo sighed and nodded. He looked at Yuna's grave and murmured.

"In fact, everything we know has been a big illusion. The master key is the key to New World's main system and we thought you were the one to hide it."

"What nonsense are you saying? That....."

"Yes. You thought we hid it. While we were afraid that you got your hands on the master code and hid it somewhere. And you probably tried to back into the main server to obtain the master code. Isn't that right?"

".....It's not like that?"

"No. The person who hid the master code was someone else."

"Someone other than Global Exos hid the master code?"

"Yuna ssi."

Ha Myung-woo replied in a bittersweet voice. Then Park Woo-seong's face warped with derision.

"Shut up! How dare you bring Yuna into this?"

"It is true. I also only discovered this fact recently."

Park Woo-seong looked at Yuna's grave bitterly while Ha Myung-woo continued.

"And I finally discovered the whole truth behind this event."

"The whole truth?"

"Yes. You might understand better than me. When we were originally designing New World's scenarios, there was no Dark Lord or 7 heroes. But then the existence known as the Dark Lord suddenly showed up in the scenarios. And the existence of the 7 heroes followed. The Dark Lord is the presence that you, Park Woo-seong created."

Park Woo-seong's forehead wrinkled at those words.

"The Dark Lord didn't exist in the development phase so his identity isn't that of a simple NPC. He was a computer virus planted by you to destroy the data on the main server of New World. The 'Project: Lucifer.' And Project: Lucifer tried to destroy the main server when New World was on the verge of commercialization."

"I had to do it! I shouldn't have made New World in the first place! She....that game if the devil that killed her!"

Park Woo-seong suddenly shouted angrily. Ha Myung-woo didn't pay any attention to him and just continued talking.

"But Project: Lucifer was stopped before it could destroy New World's data."

"That was quite surprising. You stupid and slow guys noticed my plan. But you guys couldn't completely remove Project: Lucifer."

Park Woo-seong snorted and muttered. Ha Myung-woo just shook his head and said.

"No, it's embarrassing to admit but we didn't even know the existence of Project: Lucifer until recently."

"What? What does that mean?"

"Of course, we knew that the main server was being infected with a virus at the time. However, we didn't understand that Project: Lucifer was something you made. And we didn't know how to stop it. We could only watch from the sidelines as the virus blew up the server data. Yet Project: Lucifer was suddenly sealed up."

"Spontaneously sealed up? Nonsense. That is impossible!"

"Yes. It is impossible. If we had known the cause at that time then this situation wouldn't have occurred..... But at the time, we weren't able to connect to the main server to examine everything. And now we barely found the reason why. At the time, the virus was stopped by the existence of the 7 heroes."

Park Woo-seong looked strange by the end of Ha Myung-woo's words.

".....Is this a hoax? The 7 heroes are just data from a scenario!"

"That's what I thought until now. However, that isn't the actual reality. Just like the Dark Lord was a computer virus, the 7 heroes was an antivirus program disguised as a scenario."

That's right. This was the reason why the heroes' skills were specialized for the demons. The 7 heroes were a program designed to fight back against Project: Lucifer. While Project: Lucifer was spreading through the main server, the 7 heroes had sealed it up. This was the 1st Demonic War that the NPCs in New World. It was known as the Dark Century.

Park Woo-seong muttered with a confused look.

"N-no way! Then who..... Who designed the 7 heroes?"

"Don't you already know?"

Ha Myung-woo stared at Park Woo-seong.

"It was Yuna."

"Y-Yuna? T-that's impossible....."

"The only people who could connect to the main server were you and Yuna."

"Lies, you're lying! Yuna..... Yuna suffered after receiving curses from the users and created New World even if it meant dying. So why would Yuna stop me?"

"Do you really think Yuna worked on New World even on her sickbed because of the users' complaints?"

"There is no other reason!"

"If you look at this then you'll understand."

Ha Myung-woo sighed and pulled out a letter. The letter had 'To my last love' written on the front. Park Woo-seong's eyes shook as he saw the writing.

"T-this....?"

"Yuna probably sent this to you right before she died. But you took her corpse and disappeared without a trace after she died. Therefore the letter was sent back to the hospital where Yuna received her medical treatment. It was left in the archive until someone came looking for it. After the SP found your notes in the villa, they went to the hospital and retrieved it. If you read this then you will start to know it was just a misunderstanding."

Ha Myung-woo carefully laid the letter on the ground and stepped back. There was a reason Ha Myung-woo was acting so carefully around Park Woo-seong. Once again, he had checked the situation in New World while coming here through the MP. He had witnessed the scene where everything froze except for Lucifer who was restored. There was only one thing in New World that could cause this! It was the master code. Then it was highly likely that the master code would be linked with Park Woo-seong's laptop. If the master code was connected to the laptop then Park Woo-seong could destroy New World with one press of a button. In the end, Park Woo-seong would hold New World hostage. Park Woo-seong dropped the laptop and picked up the letter. And a familiar handwriting could be seen.

-To Woo-seong ssi who is my first and last love.....

Woo-seong ssi, I'm so sorry. How much did I hurt you while pouring all my efforts into New World? You must've felt pain and anger, as well as an inability to understand. But that is just your misconception.

As you know, I poured my remaining time into New World. I'm now dying. That fact doesn't change. If this was New World then there might be a way but unfortunately, I am a real person. So I really thought a lot.

I'm a stupid fool who didn't know how to leave you alone and hurting. I wanted to leave something that reminded you of me.

The huge world of New World is like our child. I created all the scenarios in New World and if you wander the world then you'll encounter landscapes and people that I made. I truly believe that is the greatest gift I can give you.

But you..... You're trying to break the results with your own hands. I was afraid of that. I tried a few times but you wouldn't listen. Therefore I had to secretly hide the master code in New World.

Please understand. I had to do it. Because the person who will feel the saddest if New World is destroyed is you.....

I'm hoping all the misconceptions have been cleared by the time you find the master code. I'm begging you, for our child New World.

"T-this is.....!"

Park Woo-seong trembled and stuttered. Ha Myung-woo sighed and murmured.

"It is as you can see. Yuna was the one who hid the master code. She wanted to save your child New World. When you ignored the contents of the letter and made Lucifer, she created the 7 heroes in order to give the users in New World the power."

That's right. That's why every event related to the Red Man's plan to restore Lucifer involved the 7 heroes. When the scattered 7 heroes gathered, it was a perfect vaccination to stop the havoc caused by the Red Man. All of this wasn't a coincidence but the result of a conflict between Park Woo-seong and Yuna. And Global Exos was the one who suffered the damage! If they thought about it from the beginning, it was just a huge couples fight.

".....No!"

Park Woo-seong murmured in a trembling voice. He shook his head roughly and shouted.

"No! It can't be! There is no way! This is fake!"

"Park Woo-seong ssi! Don't you already know? Yuna enjoyed New World more than anybody else. Why do you think that is? That's why she was delighted that she could see the result with you before she died!"

Then Park Woo-seong recalled something.

-It's now finished.

Yuna smiled wider than ever. That's right. In fact, Park Woo-seong knew it already. No, he knew better than anyone else. She wanted to leave evidence that she had lived! That's why she didn't have a grudge against Global Exos and the users.

"I....I....I...."

Park Woo-seong trembled and murmured as he stared into the distance.

"SP! Secure Park Woo-seong and his laptop!"

The SP secured the collapsed Park Woo-seong and his laptop. The SP searched Park Woo-seong and exclaimed.

"Team Chief-nim, Park Woo-seong seems to have swallowed poison!"

"W-what?"

"He probably intended to die after bringing this to an end."

"Dammit! His state?"

"If we go to a hospital right now then we can save him in time!"

"Then why are you making a fuss? Head to the hospital as quickly as possible!"

"Yes!"

The SP member hurriedly lifted Park Woo-seong and ran down the mountain. Ha Myung-woo watched them leave before turning around and said.

"The laptop? The master code?"

"I-I don't know. The laptop turned off from the shock just then."

"What, what the?"

Ha Myung-woo's face paled.

'Damn, what on earth is going on.....?'

Ark felt like his heard was going to explode. They finally knocked down Lucifer and the Red Man was pushed to the edge of death so why was this happening? Just as the Red Man was in a critical condition, everything suddenly froze?

'Somehow..... I need to somehow move.....'

Ark bit his lip as he stared at the Red Man's back. Suddenly the Red Man seemed to twitch. Lucifer's body also returned to its previous dead state. At the same time, Ark felt the unidentified pressure that stopped him from moving disappear. It was the moment Ark had prayed for. Ark's body reacted faster than his head. There was no time to worry about what was going on in the vicinity. This was his only chance!

"...Dark Strike!"

Ark shot forward and attacked. At the same time, the black light from his sword split the Red Man vertically. A long line was drawn vertically down the Red Man and he collapsed to his knees. He shook his head and let out a long sigh as he looked towards the sky.

"Hah....auto program.....I....."

Those were the last words of the Red Man who dreamt about ruining New World.

The Red Man didn't move anymore and collapsed to the ground.

-A level 999 chaotic player has been killed.

<Fame +1,890>

The message appeared when the Red Man fell. The Red Man was level 999! That was the current maximum level in New World.

"Eh eh eh eh?"

The attack squad only realized that the paralysis was released after everything ended. They stared blankly at Ark and the Red Man's body. Too much had happened in a short time so they couldn't grasp the situation yet. After a few moments, the absentminded attack squad members finally realized what had happened and screamed.

"Waaahhhhhhhh!"

"W-we won! We defeated the Dark Lord!"

"We knocked down the source of evil!"

"We did it, we did it!"

The screams spread through the Rwigenberg. The expedition members fighting the demons outside the Rwigenberg also screamed. But Ark already didn't hear those cries.

'There is unmistakably something shining over there.....'

Ark looked at where the Red Man tried to shove his hand into Lucifer's dead body and had an idea. Something was shining from the dead body. Then wouldn't it be an item? Furthermore, the opponent was the Dark Lord Lucifer so wouldn't the loot be better than anything Ark received before?" Although the Red Man was close to an NPC thanks to the auto

program, he was still considered a user. A chaotic user would definitely drop one equipment. It was an equipment used by a level 999 user!

'I can't let anyone else get these items!'

"Burning Soul, search Lucifer and the Red Man's body and pack all the items."

Ark whispered quietly while observing the celebratory atmosphere.

Kurarara, kurarara!

Burning Soul also sensed the shining item and stealthily approached Lucifer. After a while, a message window popped up.

-You summon Burning Soul has obtained 'Asura's Sword.'

'Asura's Sword is the sword the Red Man used?'

Although he hadn't confirmed the actual item, he had seen the sword carved with Asura when fighting. The Red Man only dropped one item so he couldn't get the pair of swords but it was much more valuable than armour. Ark felt like drooling at the thought of the item. A message window showed up again as Burning Soul swallowed another item.

-Your summon Burning Soul.....

"Ark!"

It was at that moment. He suddenly heard Bread's voice from behind him. Ark who was going to check the loot jumped with surprise and turned around.

"What? Why? Why?"

"You bastard.....!"

'Damn, did I get caught? Do I have to share it with the thousands of people here?'

No matter how could the items are, they would only be worth a few silver if divided between that many people. Although Ark hadn't won this battle alone, he was obviously the general. But he wouldn't be alive if it wasn't for the expedition members and attack squad so they would expect a share. And now that Ark was a celebrity, he couldn't just dine and dash! Tears gathered in his eyes at the thought of sharing his spoils. Then Bread put his arm around Ark's neck and shouted.

"Hahahaha! You were a tough dark wolf when I first met you. And now you're crying? This situation is good so don't be afraid to cry. You deserve it!"

"Eh? What? Is that all you have to say?"

"Then? What else is there??"

"Oh, no! Nothing! That's right, I'm feeling so good that my tears are flowing!"

Ark nodded and moved away from Bread. Then he scanned the attack squad members. He wanted to check if anyone had noticed Ark obtaining the loot. However, there looks were only filled with joy and admiration towards Ark who defeated the Dark Lord. Ark was so glad that he really felt like crying. Ark closed his fist and raised it towards the sky.

"We came, we fought, we won!"

"Waaahhhhhhhh!"

The attack squad members cheered at Ark's words. However, the battle wasn't completely finished yet. There were still demons around Kwarian. But the demons have lost the leadership of the Red Man and Lucifer so they were just a common group of monsters. Rwigenberg's shield had also disappeared with Lucifer's death. The expedition's morale shot towards the sky and they easily wiped out the demons. The expedition members slaughtered the demons so Ark's experience and achievements shot up like crazy.

“Huhuhuhu!”

Inside a forest with a dismal atmosphere. A man let out a manic laugh as he looked at a pot. A bat was sitting on his shoulder with an appalled look while a giant snake rubbed its body against his leg. Next to him was a giant skeleton napping. It was a medieval like scene!

They were Ark, Burning Soul, Curio and Purital. Ark stared into the pot as Curio mumbled.

“Master, is it done yet? How long does it have?”

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack?

Kurarara, kurarara?

“Just wait 3 minutes.”

Ark swallowed his saliva and muttered while staring into the pot. In fact, Ark was also going crazy with frustration. Had he ever felt time passing this slowly since he started New World? The remaining 3 minutes felt like 3 years. Ark looked at the dark forest and thought back.

“It’s been three months since I’ve started travelling. Has it already been four months since Lucifer and the Red Man was defeated? I’ve been so preoccupied that I hadn’t noticed how much time passed. No, it actually feels like a long time ago?”

That’s right. It had already been four months since the Kwarian battle that the world was focused on ended. And Ark had experienced numerous events in those four months. If he put those events in order, the first one was the reward from the Schudenberg Kingdom. Ark had actually forgotten that it was a Legend Quest from the Schudenberg Kingdom. The Demonic War was won so the Schudenberg gave out extravagant rewards. And the person who acquired the most achievements in the Schudenberg Kingdom was Ark. He was the

commander of the 2nd expedition that included the airship, stopped Lucifer and defeated the Red Man in a 1 on 1 battle. Therefore Ark received the legendary 'Kingdom Guardian' set that the Schudenberg Kingdom had kept for hundreds of years. That's why Ark was now wearing cool leather armour.

-Kingdom Guardian's Leather Armour (Legendary Armour)

<Defense 330, Physical Resistance +20%, Magic Resistance +20%, Strength +40, Special option skill [Immortal Body] is available>

-Kingdom Guardian's Leather Gloves (Legendary Gloves)

<Defense 130, Attack Speed +20%, Critical Hit Rate +20%, Agility +40, Special option skill [Hand of Glory] available>

-Kingdom Guardian's Leather Helmet (Legendary Helmet)

<Defense 200, Spirit magic resistance +40%, Intelligence +30, Wisdom +30, Special option skill [Fighter's Commitment] is available>

-Kingdom Guardian's Leather Shoes (Legendary Shoes)

<Defense 100, Movement Speed +50%, Effect of the terrain is invalidated, Luck +40, Special option skill [Quick] is available>

-Kingdom Guardian's Leather Mantle (Legendary Mantle)

<Defense 50, Attribute Magic Resistance +40%, Heat and cold resistance +50%, Stamina +40, Special option skill [Glare] available>

*<Kingdom Guardian> set effect: Strength +60, Agility +60, Stamina +60, Defense +60, Special option skill [Hero's Shout] is available>

That was the summarized information of all the equipment he received. However, that wasn't the only reward for receiving 1st place in achievements. In reality, Global Exos handed out a cash prize of 500 million for the person who received 1st place in achievements. Unfortunately there was still the hidden 'something,' that Ark knew was the black code items, which nobody had found so the 1 billion won prize hadn't been given.

‘Well, if a person eats too much then he will become sick.’

Ark gave up on receiving the 1 billion won prize for the moment. If he hadn’t found it even when killing the demons then shouldn’t he give up? The second special event was that Ark changed to his 3rd stage profession after the war ended. Ark had switched to the 3rd profession when he dropped by Lancel village. When Ark returned the elders from the Meow, Wolrang, raccoons and the White Tiger clan ran up to him. They praised Ark’s achievements and gave him the designation of ‘Hero Maban.’

Hero Maban was the title that all the beast clans swore allegiance to! At that moment he switched to his 3rd stage profession. That’s right. Ark was Christin’s descendant. Therefore Ark only received the 3rd stage profession when he received the title Hero Maban. The condition to switching to the 3rd stage profession was defeating the Dark Lord Lucifer and receiving the title of Hero Maban. It really was a difficult condition when he thought about it. Thus Ark switched from Dark Soul to ‘Dark Eternity.’ At the same time, his Area Declaration and skills such as Dark Strike, Dark Tempest, Dark Scale and Moonlight Illusion increased by one stage. Of course, his dark attribute bonus also increased tremendously..... And....

“Heh heh heh heh heh heh!”

Ark smirked at the simmering pot. In fact, Ark had received two more rewards that nobody knew about from the Demonic War. It was the spoils that he received from the Red Man and Lucifer! One of them was the Asura’s Sword that the Red Man used. Asura’s Sword belonged to a level 999 user and it really was no joke. When compared to Shining Darkness, its attack power was 4 times more and the special option ‘Asura’s Truth’ was enough to make his eyes pop out. If he sold it on the auction site then he would receive an unimaginable market price! Unfortunately, the level limit was 850 so Ark couldn’t use it yet. The darkness threatening New World had been pushed back and Ark left something in his personal safe in Lancel village. And that was Lucifer’s Essence.

Lucifer's Essence.... That's right. Lucifer's Essence was an ingredient that he could use for Survival Cooking. In fact, he had felt quite disappointed when he first saw Lucifer's Essence. He defeated the Dark Lord and only received one essence? It really felt like he had been hit in the back of the head. However, if he thought about it then it was an inevitable result. Lucifer's identity was a computer virus. A computer virus wouldn't drop a lot of loot. But Ark hadn't known that place and he had been disappointed. However, wasn't it quite good?

If Lucifer had dropped a lot of loot then the other users would've noticed. When he thought about it in that way, he thought it was better to obtain only Lucifer's Essence than sharing a lot of items with other users. Anyway, Lucifer's Essence came from the strongest monster in New World. If he made an immortality pill from the strongest monster in New World then the bonus stats would be beyond imagination. That was Ark's guess after seeing the ingredients needed.

-Lucifer's Immortality Pill Recipe

Jellified Lucifer's Essence 1/1

Giant's Fingers 0/1,000

Black Wyvern's Fangs 0/1,000

Hairy Feet of the People who walk in Darkness 0/1,000

Fire Elemental's Determination 0/1,000

Each ingredient came from a level 500 boss monster! Other users would feel despair if they saw the recipe. But who was Ark? After checking the ingredients, Ark immediately went around and gathered them. After 3 months spend in severe cold, a hot desert and a hell valley, he had finally obtained all the items. And he spend one week cooking it in the pot! Finally Lucifer's Immortality Pill would be completed after 3 minutes.

'I really struggled in the meantime.'

When he thought back to the beginning, it seemed even more difficult than defeating Lucifer. Time continued to flow while Ark was locked in his recollections. After a moment. An intense light came from the pot! He watched as all the ingredients disappeared and a small pill appeared.

-The maturation process has ended and 'Lucifer's Immortality Pill' has been completed.

You have completed the 'Monster's Pill' that has been passed down from ancient techniques. The Immortality Pill is one of the hidden secrets in New World. It allows you to maximise the power contained in the Monster's Essence and apply it to the player. Making the Immortality Pill is one of the biggest honours for Survival Cooking chefs and is an achievement that has significant implications.

* Fame increased by 1,000.

* Intelligence increased by 50.

* Survival cooking skill increases by 30.

* Lucifer's Immortality Pill information has been updated.

<Number of Immortality Pills completed: 8>

"It is finally complete!"

Ark lifted the pill with trembling hands. It was an item that took 3 months to gather the ingredients! He had finally completed the Dark Lord Lucifer's Immortality Pill. What bonuses would the Immortality Pill give Ark? Just the thought of it made his heart jump.

"Calm down. I don't want to have a heart attack before I eat it."

Ark took a deep breath to calm down his heard and raised the pill slowly to his mouth. He swallowed the pill and the information window flashed in front of him.

-Lucifer's Immortality Pill (Immortality Pill rating: ☆, Degree of

Completion: ☆)

This is a mysterious essence that the lover of Project: Lucifer's creator hid in the body.

*There is an added bonus according to the degree of completion.

<All stats +50>

-The power of the Creator, the 'Master Code' has been absorbed into your body.

<Master Code: The master code is what the Creator used to compose all data in New World. The person with control of the master code can access all the systems of New World and manipulate it in different ways. This gives you a near infinite ability in New World>

"Eh eh? What is this?"

A baffled exclamation fell from Ark's mouth.

Epilogue

"All the viewers, hello. This is the game exclusive news."

A reporter smiled and began to talk in a studio showing the logo of the game exclusive news.

"It has been 3 years since New World swept the online games and it currently has 10 million users playing. But this feature is different from our previous ones. What is different?"

The female broadcaster smiled at the host's question and answered.

"Today we have Ark, who is the best celebrity of New World in the studio."

"Huh? Ark-nim? The legendary player Ark who resurrected thousands of users and defeated the Dark Lord half a year ago? Moreover, he is the president of the complex business Ark's Corporation and is the first user to become a Duke in the Schudenberg Kingdom."

"Omo, you know quite a bit about him?"

"I'm just Ark's fan."

The host smiled and replied.

"But Ark is known for not really appearing in the media."

"This is something worth celebrating."

"Something worth celebrating?"

"Listen to it yourself."

The female broadcaster smiled as a young man entered the studio. The young man dressed in jeans and an old t-shirt was none other than Hyun-woo.

"Welcome Ark-nim!"

The host instantly greeted Hyun-woo as he entered. Then he hurled questions as soon as Hyun-woo sat.

"You're much younger than I thought so can I ask for your age?"

"I'm turning 25 this year."

"Oh, that's so young. But could you tell us what you have to celebrate?"

"Let's see. A few days ago, Global Exos gave me a position as an advisor in the company."

"An advisor? At twenty-five years old?"

"Global Exos told me that it is unprecedented to appoint someone so young to that position."

Hyun-woo scratched his head with an embarrassed expression. The host looked him in the eye and asked.

“It is really amazing that you were selected. Can I ask you the secret?”

“The secret.....”

In fact, the process by which Hyun-woo became the advisor was very complicated. Two months ago, Hyun-woo had swallowed Lucifer’s Immortality Pill. He thought it would give him ridiculous stats but the immortality pill ended up giving Ark the master code.

Yuna had hidden the master code inside Project: Lucifer. It was the trick of hiding the treasure inside the enemy camp! However, Park Woo-seong who knew the location of the master code had fallen into a coma so Global Exos was unable to find it. Then Hyun-woo ended up eating it. Global Exos later became aware of it and used all types of methods to regain the master code. However, the master code had already been digested by Ark. There was no method of separating the master code from Ark.

However, they couldn’t just release someone with the ability of the Creator into New World. Therefore Global Exos had given Ark the official position of ‘Manager.’ Hyun-woo recalled that time and laughed.

“I just put all my efforts into New World. Global Exos appreciated it and decided to thank me.”

“Hahaha, isn’t that a coy answer? Are you afraid that others could reach that position?”

Hyun-woo gave an easy going smile and answered.

“You seem disappointed so I apologize.”

“Not at all. If you don’t mind this impolite question, won’t you receive quite a lot of money know that Ark’s Corporation is so successful and you are the advisor of Global Exos? I don’t understand everything but it seems enough to call you a game tycoon.”

"Quite a lot of people seem to think this."

"Are we wrong?"

"It depends on the definition of a game tycoon."

"Are you deliberately avoiding the answer?"

"You deliberately gave me a question that is difficult to answer."

The host laughed at Hyun-woo's answer.

"Then I'm going to cut to the chase. You've gained a lot of wealth and fame after the Demonic War both in the game and reality. And many viewers are still interested in your videos. That's why we wanted to meet Ark-nim. Ark-nim was the commander of thousands of troops and you also defeated the Dark Lord and the Red Man."

The studio started playing the video of the Kwarian battle on the large screen. The host didn't ask Hyun-woo any questions while playing the video. After 1 hour.....

Hyun-woo looked at the clock and became surprised.

"Oh I'm sorry. We'll have to finish this here."

"Huh? What.....?"

"There is another important event today."

Hyun-woo rose and began to leave the studio.

"Wait a minute. Just one more word. What does Ark-nim think is the secret to your success?"

The confused host hurriedly asked. Hyun-woo stopped and replied.

"Grinding."

"G-grinding?"

"No matter how times change, grinding is one thing that doesn't change in online games."

"Hurry Burning Soul!"

Kurarara, kurarara!

Ark raced over the seas on Burning Soul. He appeared at an island after flying for a while. It was Seutandal that was previously known as the Netherworld. Ark flew across the coast and headed towards Haman Fortress. But something was different about Haman Fortress. The flags of every kingdom were hung and there were a large number of flowers all over the place. Today an unprecedented event was occurring at Haman Fortress.

"I'm a little late. Damn, that guy will become grumpy....."

He landed in a square in Haman Fortress. Then a group of people stampeded towards him.

"Ark, you only arrived now?"

"It has already started."

The men were the rehabilitation members.

"Don't you know you're the last one to arrive?"

"Is everyone else already here?"

"Yes, they arrived a while ago."

"Where is JusticeMan ajusshi and my mother?"

"Don't be ridiculous. You know what they're like now that they're getting married soon."

Jjak-tung frowned and pointed to one side. The pair of them were stuck together without caring about the gazes of other people..... They were JusticeMan and So-mi.

After the Demonic War ended, JusticeMan finally managed to successfully propose to So-mi. And their wedding was occurring in one month. Therefore JusticeMan and So-mi weren't afraid to show their affection everywhere.

"Damn, do we have to grow old as bachelors?"

"I have to find a lover quickly."

Bul-kkun pouted and grumbled. Then someone muttered from behind them.

"I think it is impossible with your face."

"What the? What scum...."

Bul-kkun turned around and was about to shout when he flinched and closed his mouth. The man standing behind him raised an eyebrow and asked.

"It is me. What will you do?"

"Ah no, you're Isyuram hyung-nim? Hehehe, have you been living well these days?"

"That's creepy. Don't touch me."

That's right. The one who caused Bul-kkun to cringe was Isyuram. Isyuram had played an important role in stopping Maseutyu from restoring the shield so he had received quite a lot of achievement points. However, that wasn't the only thing Isyuram obtained from the Demonic War. Ark had all the data of New World thanks to the master code so he obtained the information of the criminal organization for Isyuram. Thanks to that achievement, Isyuram became the team leader

of a special cyber investigation squad. Isyuram had to live in the stuffy game unit again but he didn't hate New World despite his complaints.

"Teacher-nim, have you been well?"

"Yes, I know you're busy but you should come to the gym sometimes."

Isyuram said before heading into Haman Fortress. Bul-kkun breathed a sigh of relief when Isyuram suddenly shouted.

"Geez, it is almost finished. Let's go!"

Ark and the rehabilitation members hurriedly ran into the fortress. There were familiar faces inside.

Sid holding a large backpack (Sid was currently the chief of Seutandal's branch of the merchant's guild), Buksil, Sapjil and Ulmeok running around drooling at the food (the three pig brothers were the Seutandal branch chief of Ark's store), Bread and Redian (both of them were now officially in a relationship) and Wormer who was already dozing off (after the Demonic War, Wormer was the chief of the Magic Institute's engineering division).

Aside from the NPCs, Haman Fortress was also full of NPCs. The reason they were all gathered today.....

"Look over there. Kikiki, that guy who is always so smug is frozen."

"Didn't you hear? That guy drank alcohol and cried when he proposed."

"He also gave up his profession as an assassin."

The rehabilitation members laughed and pointed towards someone standing in front while people lined up on both sides. They were a man and woman wearing formal clothes. They were Shambala and Isabel. That's right. Today Shambala's long-time dream had become a reality. For the first time in the history of online games, a user was marrying a NPC. It was Shambala and Isabel's wedding. Apart from the NPCs and users, there were many reporters present.

“That guy, he really is marrying an NPC.”

He had heard about the wedding for a while but actually seeing it was strange. But what was the difference? They were just like people. Wasn't this New World where anything was possible? Jjak-tung nudged Ark's side and smirked.

“Hey, when are you going to get married?”

“Huh? I.....”

Ark scratched his head and blushed.

“Now the bride Isabel is going to throw her bouquet.

Isabel laughed brightly and threw her bouquet high into the sky. Then two women suddenly jumped out from the crowd. The two throwing their bodies was Roco and Lariette! The guests burst out laughing.

That was..... Anyway, Ark's worries would definitely continue.

THE END...